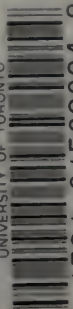


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ESSAYS ON LITERARY ART

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ESSAYS

ON

LITERARY ART

BY

HIRAM M. STANLEY

AUTHOR OF

"STUDIES IN THE EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY OF FEELING"



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PREFACE

THE main connecting thought of these Essays is that literary art, and indeed all art, is an organ in the body of human culture and life, and so dependent on all other organs and all on it. This organic view implies that art segregative or egoistic, art for art's sake, is as destructive of real art as the opposite tendency, the altruistic, that is, the making art wholly subservient to some other organ in humanity, like religion or ethics. I believe we must look at human life in all its manifestations, industrial, artistic, scientific, religious, and ethical, as constituting in totality an organism where each factor is no more to serve itself merely, or even some other member, than the eye is for the eye's sake or the hand for the hand's sake. As the eye is from the whole body and for it, and only by a constant interdependence reaches its own best development, so also is art dependent on the whole organism of civilization for its life and growth.

The first and third Essays originally appeared in *Arcadia*, a short-lived Canadian periodical. The Essays on Tennyson, on Realism, on Education and the Future of Literature, and on Thoreau, are more or less revised from articles which have appeared in *The Dial*, Chicago. The last paper is a chapter from my *Evolutionary Psychology of Feeling*, with some additions and changes.

HIRAM M. STANLEY.

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I.

Some Thoughts on English Love-Song

THE love-call of beasts and love-note of birds culminate in the love-song of man. Indeed, it was with some love-intoxicated aborigine that voice first became language, and sound, speech; the first word was a love-token, and the first sentence a love-song. Naught but the master passion could first have availed to loose man's stubborn tongue to articulate utterance, and so lift him above the speechless brute. The philologists may laugh, but here, I venture to say, is the long desired, long sought for, secret of the origin of language, and so of literature as well.

In every nation traces of the primeval pastoral remain. In English many examples might be given, but a single quatrain retaining the primitive rusticity will suffice:—

When the nytenhale singes, the wodes waxen grene,
Lef, gras, and blosme, springes in April ywene,
Ant love is to myn harte gon with one spere so keue
Nyht and day my blood hit drynkes myn hart deth me tene.

The swain here expresses his acute love-suffering with sincerity and vigour, but we miss that refinement of form and delicacy of execution which please the taste and charm the imagination. The fact is, that all primitive speech and all purely rustic language are neither prose nor poetry, but they contain the germs of both. From a single root literature springs as a twin tree whose diverse stems are prose and poetry. The earliest pastoral love-song is this primeval prose-poetry, this root form of all literature.

Crude and uncouth as the primitive pastoral is, it yet affords the inspiration and model for the polished pseudo-pastoral of eras of refinement and luxury. Theocritus, Virgil, Marlowe, Dryden, Prior, all adapt with more or less success the sweet and simple strains of the shepherd's pipe to the full orchestra of cultured expression. The Elizabethan song-writers attain as high excellence as is possible in this essentially artificial composition. Marlowe's "Passionate Shepherd to his Love," and Raleigh's "Reply," are well known; and others, less familiar, are quite as sweet; for instance, many of the songs of Thomas Campion and Nicholas Breton.

But the sweetness and strength of the Elizabethan lyric disappear in the vapid pastorals of the school

of Dryden and Pope. Here we find only stupid petrifications. These frigid conceited odes and elegies, these loose *vers de société*, are mere hollow and vain echoes of echoes, imitations of imitations. Pastoral is thoroughly formal and insipid till we come to the greatest of British love-poets, who was himself a rustic, and whose verse is the most beautiful and fluent of pastorals. In all the range of English poetry the love-songs of Robert Burns are the simplest and sweetest, the truest and tenderest. With bird-like force and freshness they fall upon our ears and touch our hearts. His best songs, "Highland Mary," "Bonnie Lesley," "Jean," "Mary Morrison," and a score of others, represent the purest poetic utterances; that melodic expression of simple emotion which is the primitive essential of all poetry.

The Pastoral is the natural expression of a simple and rude age, while the Sonnet is the characteristic form of love-song in an era of culture. Both refined and unrefined emotion bud and blossom into poetry, each after its own kind; in the due course of things we have not only the Wild Rose, but also the Jacqueminot. The sonnet is the characteristic and consummate flower of the Renaissance spirit; showy, intricate, luxurious, heavy-odoured, it stimulates and

delights the intellectual sense, and by virtue of its thorough modern quality it touches us both strongly and directly.

Shakespere's sonnets celebrate a love which is so dubious in its character, and they are so overwrought with reflection, that we cannot consider them as in any wise taking the same pre-eminence among love-poems that his plays demand in dramatic literature. Their closeness of texture and fulness of thought are marvellous, but their condensation often comes perilously near obscurity, and their intensity is too often one of cold, and not of heat. But Spenser is of quite another order. He has not Shakespere's supreme greatness, he is not a mountain oak in strength and grasp, but he is like the graceful poplar that shoots high its slender spire of boughs by some quiet stream. Spenser's love-sonnets, his Amoretti, as he calls them, have the same *spirituelle* sensuousness, the same winsome grace and refined simplicity which so charm us in the "Faerie Queen." In them we find the *naïveté* not of the rustic, but of the gentleman.

It is a long leap from the Elizabethans to Mrs. Browning, but the interim contains no love-sonnet of any great merit, with the possible exception of

Hartley Coleridge's "To a Lofty Beauty, from her poor Kinsman." Milton, Cowper, Wordsworth, and others, sounded the sonnet-song, but not to the tune of love, and we wait till the middle of the nineteenth century for anything very noble and beautiful in this kind. Then Elizabeth Barrett voices her love for Robert Browning in the so-called "Sonnets from the Portuguese." In strains of exquisitely penetrating and forceful art, in verse which palpitates with emotion, she sings love in all its moods and meetings. Here love burns with furnace heat, yet always with a pure flame; here it reaches the highest tension, yet is never ecstatic nor hysteric. The feminine note in love-song is naturally faint and shy; the female bird, hid in the dense covert, sings brief and low her answering note. Mrs. Browning's song is long and loud, yet never bold, but in every word most modest and womanly. These lyrics are thus of rarest quality, and perhaps unique, and so of priceless value. They constitute Mrs. Browning's most enduring work as they express her deepest emotional experience. The only later series of love-sonnets worthy in any wise to be compared to them is Rossetti's "House of Life." These have not the same force of reality as the Portuguese Sonnets, they are more the history of

love than the expression of individual affection. This difference in aim, the one personal, the other general, is marked in the opening sonnet of each series, both splendid examples of love-song. Rossetti's sonnet peals forth sonorous, like the full organ's resounding swell; Mrs. Browning's is vibrant with an exquisite music, like the long, sweet note of the *vox humana*; Rossetti's, in his Shakesperean sweep and strength, stands unsurpassed for royal power; Mrs. Browning's, with its classic majesty and sweetness of tone, attains the height of queenly beauty. The "House of Life" is sometimes so mystic and Dantesque as to give the effect of aloofness, and its studied sensuousness of imagery is often too intricate and condensed for clearness and fluency. Yet it is a magnificent body of verse. The warm breath of love fills the whole House; everywhere is high ardour, strong masculine touch, and superb art.

The primitive pastoral and the polished sonnet are the chief forms of the love-lyric, but there are many minor varieties more or less well defined; the ditty, madrigal, song in the narrow sense—that is, set to music—ballad, rondeau, and others, on which I have but a remark or two to offer.

In Elizabethan song and occasional verse, and,

indeed, in all Elizabethan poetry, we must remark the delightfully naïve manner, as far removed from boorish brusqueness, on the one hand, as from our latter-day reticence and self-restraint, on the other. That sweet songster, Herrick, pleases both by the melody of his numbers and by his cheery frankness of expression. His Hesperides bubble over with a refreshing naturalness. Again a beautiful serenade by Thomas Campion ends with this prettily ingenuous couplet:—

“Do not mock me in thy bed,
While these cold nights freeze me dead.”

The flow of Elizabethan song is that of a brook, which, purling in the sunshine, brightens and lightens in every drop, with no tangled growth, no deep dark pools, no slimy mud, in all its reach of shimmering shallows. While the Elizabethans do not refuse to look at the pain in life and the mystery of death, yet they give but a passing glance; they are far too engrossed in the joys and activities of living to worry and weary themselves with speculation and doubt.

The latest form of love-song, introduced, indeed, within the last three decades, is a revival of the artificial measures of Villon and Voiture, the Ballade,

Rondeau, Chant Royal, Sestina, Villanelle, and Triolet. Many of our poems in these forms are mere *tours de force*, and many deal with very trivial subjects, yet in a very bright way. For instance, Mr. Dobson's merry triolet beginning—

"Rose kissed me to-day,
Will she kiss me to-morrow?"

is as light and pretty as any perfectly blown bubble. Light in theme and light in treatment, this poem and those like it are the smallest rills that trickle from Helicon.

We now come to touch upon the interesting problem as to why after-marriage song is so rare. Why does the singing always cease with the wooing and the winning? Is it that the joys of the marriage state are too deep for utterance, or rather, as Klopstock suggests, is it that the husband and wife being one, it would be a lack of modesty on his part to celebrate his wedded bliss? We may suspect, however, that it is quite in the natural order of things that song should cease with the wedding. The lady won and wed, its task is ended, and the myrtle and bay must give place to more useful plants; the poetry of life is over, the prose begins. But, whatever the cause, certain it is

that when once the happy couple are ensconced in their home the muse is thenceforth mute, the lyre is dumb, or sounds an occasional or doubtful note; the Spirit of Poetry for ever takes her flight, or visits the after-marriage realm as but a rare and transient guest. Donne has sung to his wife in his rugged verse, Habington has said some pretty things about his Castara in his so-called sonnets, and Lord Lyttleton has praised his wife in his poems, but in none of these do we find art of any high order. In later verse we have a few beautiful post-nuptial songs like Barry Cornwall's "To his Wife," and Burns' anniversary lines, beginning—

"The day returns, my bosom burns,
The blissful day we twa did meet."

It seems invidious to remark it, but, still, the little after-marriage song we have is mostly a reminiscence of nuptial and pre-nuptial joys.

Another problem, and quite a serious one, concerns the very rapid decline in love-song, both for quantity and quality, in our later nineteenth-century poetry. The most cursory historian cannot but be struck with the great falling off in genuine and serious love-song during this half century. Where, for instance, does

Tennyson strike the true lyric love-note in fulness and frankness? We look in vain for it in any measure in Robert Browning or in Matthew Arnold. Swinburne has given us some rather morbid love-verses which have the lyric-accent, but which he himself avers to be merely dramatic; and Rossetti has left us a number of noble love-poems, yet very few that are purely lyrical, that spring from the heart rather than the artistic sense. Among the minor poets and versifiers of this end of the century, real love-lyrics, true outpourings of heart-love, are scarcely to be found, though the trivial and playful amatory poem, after the Alexandrian style, is sufficiently common. Among American poets, also, the love-lyric is singularly rare. Longfellow, Bryant, and Whittier scarcely afford a single specimen, and as for Lowell, you may count them on your five fingers.

The reasons for this unhappy state of things are not far to seek. Fierce competition in science and industry leaves little time for romantic love, and it tends to become a mere incident in life. The materialism and sensualism of the time also run counter to the pure love from which alone true song can spring. Again: verse is not now, as once, a powerful weapon with the

fair. Sir Philip Sidney says that in his time "for lacking skill of a sonnet" one might lose his beloved; but nowadays a bundle of Government bonds will count for more than any packet of verses, no matter how tuneful. In general, to be poetic is a disadvantage rather than otherwise for the modern lover. Furthermore, the freedom of modern society destroys the enchantment of distance and the halo of romance which gathered about the fair damsel locked in castle or convent. Young ladies are now so very common and familiar, we meet them so constantly, in the most matter-of-fact way, in the streets, in public gatherings, and at their homes, that romance and poetry are but too apt to dissolve in thin air. We are also far too constrained to express our feelings in the open and free way so charming in our naïve ancestors. Our modern poet will express his mind in verse, but his heart, his love, is far too private and sacred to be exploited in any lyric form.

So it is that while our life may be, perhaps, not loveless, it is yet almost quite empty of true love-song; but we may well believe that in the next rejuvenation of the race, due ere long, the genuine love-lyric will again flow in copious streams of sweet and sincere song.

In conclusion now we would sum up our thoughts
in this sonnet-flight of our own:—

Song is Love's brother ; yea more, twins are they :
Together born, together, hand in hand,
Since then have wandered over sea and land.
When Love would with a man or maiden play,
Song first entrances with his dulcet lay ;
Love's fire by him is ever brightly fanned,
Love's arrow ever is at his command ;
He barbs, he keeps it keen, he speeds its way.
O Love ! shoot straight and swift thy sharpest dart,
O song ! trill clear and loud thy sweetest note ;
Thus do ye alway charm and pierce the heart
Though hard as iron. If Love too fierce hath smote,
Perchance kind song can quick allay the smart
With melody that poet never wrote.

II.

Tennyson's Rank as a Poet

SCIENTIFIC criticism in determining the rank of a poet should ignore the personal and temporary, and, like philosophy, seek to view its object *sub specie eternitatis*. The critic should ask, not, what has the poet done for me and my age, for every poet is obviously of the greatest influence in his own age, but he should enquire what is permanent and universal in his works to delight all men in all ages. It is my aim in the following remarks to lay aside my own preference, and to speak as objectively as possible.

The most notable attempt that I now recall toward determining the exact rank of a poet is in Matthew Arnold's essay on Wordsworth. There Wordsworth, by reason of his "ample body of powerful work," is definitely assigned the fifth place in the first rank of modern European poets, being surpassed only by "Shakespere, Molière, Milton, and Goethe." While

we do not now undertake to discuss either the criterion or its application, we think the criterion at least would be much improved by restating and amending it thus: The poet of the first rank and highest place is the greatest soul expressing himself on the noblest themes with perfect art in the largest body of verse. But while we may thus specify personality, theme, technique, and quantity as elements in the test, they are by no means distinct *criteria*, for the selection of the theme and its mode and length of treatment is always an expression of the writer's individuality; and, on the other hand, the writer exists for us only as he thus stands revealed. In a large and true sense there is no such thing as impersonal art; it can mean only that some natures are more objective than others in character and expression. So Shakespere is Shakespere only as manifestation of his sublime objectivity. Thus it is equally true that art is the artist and that the artist is his art. Hence it is only as a point of view in serving convenience that we under these four heads—personality, theme, technique, and quantity—attempt some determination of Tennyson's rank as a poet.

As, first of all, art is the characteristic, the individual, the original, we first ask, Does Tennyson reveal

himself as a soul of supreme power and beauty? Has he great distinctiveness and distinction, the originality and uniqueness for ever fresh and forceful, which belongs alone to the *Di Majores* of Parnassus? I think not. While he has very superior talent, and even at times genius, yet he lacks the consummate insight and frank fervid creativeness of the great masters. The Tennysonian tone is indeed true and clear, but it is not of the highest quality. Partly because of innate lack of feeling, partly by reason of a seemingly proud reserve, partly by reason of over-reflection and conservatism, emotion does not express itself on the really grand scale. Tennyson is the more expresser of sentiment and fancy than of passion and imagination. However, he undoubtedly possessed power which lay dormant for want of occasion and stimulus. Thus a war for English independence would have stirred him to vastly higher expression than he actually attained. In the Wellington ode and in the "Charge of the Light Brigade" we have but flashes of a power which remained undeveloped. And so for lack of other stimulus he turned and looked within upon his own meagre experience or he roamed the legendary past. But the greatest minds are superior to circumstance and fulfil themselves in spite of it.

Hence we cannot account Tennyson a genius of the first order. The clear intensity and terrible brevity of Dante is not his, nor the profound transcendent scope of Shakespere and Goethe, nor even the imaginative strength of such minds of the second order as Byron and Shelley. If literature be at the core, as we think, merely the revelation of personality, then Tennyson is only one of the little masters.

Again, does Tennyson's choice and conception of theme give him a very high place as poet? "*In Memoriam*," the most significant, that is, the most Tennysonian of his works, is only the fragmentary diary of a private grief. Through the mist of his tears he has momentary glimpses of nature and man transfigured, and he gives us a series of little poetic sketches—slight, subtle, and reflective. In apt and finished phrase he sets forth his varying intellectual moods of sadness and resignation, but he never sobs; there is no threnody. His gentleness and restraint may deceive some as to the reality and depth of utterance. Thus Taine regards Tennyson as here acting the part of a "correct gentleman, with bran new gloves," who "wipes away his tears with a cambric handkerchief," and "displays throughout the compunction of a respectful well-trained layman." So

it may seem to the flippant Frenchman, and yet it remains true that these little pieces express what is best and most real in Tennyson's mind and heart; though the theme is not large enough or the execution continuous enough to constitute a poem of the first order.

"Maud," like "*In Memoriam*," is a collection of bits of verse. Here is no complete picture but a series of shifting kaleidoscopic sketches. Why Tennyson chose this congeries form for his two chief productions is hard to understand. Is this fragmentariness a definite art form, a real mosaic? or does it merely result from Tennyson's severe self-criticism which made him feel unequal to a connected whole? or does it arise from a sensitive reticence? Perhaps all three may be reasons. But however that may be, "Maud" expresses with studied skill a rather supposititious love in its moods manifold. Moods, indeed, are the subjects which Tennyson most affects, but their reality is too self-conscious to avail for the highest art. And "Maud" has not the vital quality of the Portuguese Sonnets, the rhapsody seems often forced and fevered. And, further, we are too often more strongly reminded of Robert Browning than Alfred Tennyson in the sharp transition and abrupt phrase.

In both "*In Memoriam*" and "Maud" Tennyson is too constrained and thoughtful to give free lyric force to a complete poem. While we come here and there upon a snatch of true and perfect song, yet for the most part a certain narrowness of conception and *finesse* of treatment give only studies. But Tennyson was, no doubt, more or less conscious of his limitations, and strove desperately to overcome them, yet his Pegasus will not mount, howe'er he spur him.

In lyric art Tennyson but infrequently rises above second rate; in dramatic and epic—the higher arts—he as rarely rises above third rate. If he cannot achieve and delineate his own individuality perfectly, he still more often fails in rendering the individual as representative of humanity. Such world-poems as the *Iliad*, the *Inferno*, *Hamlet*, and *Faust* have their universal value and interest by treating this theme with sublime power and insight. Such poems are the offspring of a lifetime of spiritual endeavour by earnest, free, and mighty souls. Tennyson is plainly not with these. He cannot realize dramatically. This is largely due to the fact that he could not, like Goethe, cultivate life for art's sake, or make life merely a subject of art. Tennyson could neither resign his individuality for the

bare study of the external, nor yet could he really express himself, and thus he falls fatally between the objective and subjective, the dramatic and lyric. He cannot forget himself sufficiently to become a dramatist, nor others sufficiently to become a lyrist.

Nor can it be said that Tennyson rises to a very high rank by reason of such narrative poems as the "Idylls of the King" or the "Princess." The graceful elegant archaism of the "Idylls" is most pleasing; but here, as elsewhere, the laureate is more translator and interpreter than creator. The "Princess" certainly stands high in its kind, but the kind is hardly the highest. The Tennysonian world is here, indeed, extremely beautiful, and, like many of his early poems, reminds us of the art of Albert Moore. It is a dream-world apart, where life is full and rounded out in a large loveliness, where pulses a lulling and enchanting music, and where all things glow with richly delicate tints in the deep mellow light.

It must, then, be remarked that Tennyson's themes for the most part lie either in the dream-world or else in the romantic or classic past. The garish light of the present day and its strident noises are disquieting. Sometimes, indeed, Tennyson pictures the life of the day, but the impression is such as we get from looking

at a house across the street through the wrong end of an opera glass. If Tennyson does not find a space or time vista he makes one. Tennyson is mainly a romanticist-classicist. He turns and returns to the past where his ideals are. As he himself said to James Knowles, "It is the distance that charms me in the landscape, the picture and the past, and not the immediate to-day in which I move." This "passion of the past," which possessed him, as he said, from his boyish days, gives indeed a noble perspective beauty to his idealizing art, but hinders it from the most vigorous and original life. Tennyson gives no full expression to his age, he is not the apostle of modernity or cosmopolitanism. Our industrial, democratic, scientific civilization finds but reluctant recognition with him. Thus no great theme came to him, and he made none, and so he achieved no complete masterpiece of creative art, lyric, epic, or dramatic.

If we come now to the third test, technique, we find Tennyson supreme. He expresses his broad and brooding fancy with an absolute artistic completeness and finish, without the suggestion of either over-drawing or underdrawing. He is never sketchy or impressionist. Of his instrument, such as it is, he is perfect master, and his touch is always sure yet

velvety. He has descriptive touches of magic power, thus :—

“The long wash of Australasian seas,”
and
“Thro’ scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim seas.”

But the line of highest charm is

“The horns of Elfland faintly blowing.”

Here is that perfection of poetic perspective which haunts us for ever with its penetrative beauty. And here also is that strength, nobility, and purity of conception which mark the highest art. But Tennyson has not produced enough of this first-class art to make him a first-class poet; a dozen bits, perfect both in technique and conception, will hardly lift an artist to the first rank.

But though Tennyson's work displays great clearness and finish of style, there are occasional strokes which seem over-refined and obscurantist. Thus in such figures as

“Keep dry their light from tears,”

we see either euphuism or a certain straining after effect which is in the main quite foreign to Tennyson. On the other hand, such touches of mixed figures may be regarded, like apparent dissonance in music, as but

the highest art. As the progress of musical expression from Beethoven to Brahms has resulted in highly esoteric forms which seem harshly unmusical to the uninitiated, so we may suppose a corresponding progress in poetry.

Another point in poetic art, but at the opposite pole, is the use of commonplace. In general Tennyson is master here. Thus

"Come into the garden, Maud,"

is highly poetic, though the rather staring art of the next line,

"The black-bat night has flown,"

causes a too sudden and strong contrast. In this same poem, however, we come upon two lines of inexcusably bad art,

"I was walking a mile,
More than a mile from the shore."

This in its bald precision of commonplace equals Wordsworth at his worst. But for the whole of Tennyson's work this is a very little spot, and though Tennyson uses the commonplace only occasionally, the use in general is quite justified. The commonplace is only glorified into art when it comes at the exactly

fit moment. This moment is often the opening of the poems, as in Mrs. Browning's "Casa Guidi Windows,"

"I heard last night a little child go singing."

The naturalness of Shakespere is but a certain idealized and concentrated commonplace.

Tennyson's art becomes perfect in its kind by a self-criticism which makes the art too self-conscious and self-centered. He speaks less to us than to himself. His musing monologue becomes monotonous in its measured beauty; and as the sweetness of the most delicate honey at length palls on the taste, and the sheen of the glossiest satin wearies the eye, so this irreproachable elegance of diction and style, and all this elaborate, deft, and subtle art at length becomes tedious, and we long for speech more direct, blunt, bold, and simple. At such times we welcome the robuster spirit and truer lyric ring of Walt Whitman, despite the raggedness of his art forms. We can then say of Tennyson, as of very few others, that if he had not been so conscientious an artist he might have been a greater poet.

As to the fourth criterion, quantity, Tennyson stands only fairly well, and though the bulk of production

is considerable, it is not really large, especially for one whose whole life was devoted to poetry.

On the whole, then, my impression is that Tennyson, taken from individuality, theme, quality, and quantity, ranks neither with the five supreme poets—Homer, Dante, Shakespere, Milton, Goethe—nor yet with the poets of second rank, about a score—Chaucer, Spenser, Burns, Byron, Shelley, Heine, Ariosto, Tasso, Camoens, Calderon—but his place is among the first of a third order, with such unlike poets as Pope, Dryden, Cowper, Scott, and Keats. In short, Tennyson is a most brilliant virtuoso, but not a great creative poet.

III.

Some Remarks on Wordsworth

OUR fathers killed the prophets, and we build their tombs. Wordsworth received scant honour in his lifetime, and for the greater part of it he was practically ignored by the great mass of readers. Critics poured contumely upon him, and although a few friends clung to him, yet even they often had their misgivings. But in the latter half of this century his fame has steadily grown, as the sense of his solid work as thinker, prophet, and poet, has impressed itself upon the minds of men. Editions of his works, selected and collected, have multiplied amazingly, so that a very large proportion of the best English and American publishers now print his poems in some form.

The uninitiated might wonder how the record of so uneventful a life as Wordsworth's could be made to fill three large volumes of some four hundred and fifty

pages each in Professor Knight's edition of *Wordsworth*; but those who know the methods of modern biography making will easily understand how this may be done. We now have, properly speaking, no lives of great men, but only collections of their letters, journals, notes, conversations, arranged in chronological order, and supplemented by extracts from the writings and journals of their relatives and friends, the whole being often a huge, unwieldy mass of matter, much of it more or less irrelevant. From these crude materials the reader is left to draw up a biography for himself. This prevalent passion for original sources and mere facts has a good side, in that it gives reality and vividness to the reader's impression, but a bad side, in leaving him bewildered, having no clear and connected idea of the whole. Professor Knight has well edited the materials for a life of Wordsworth, but he has not written the Life. In truth, the life of Wordsworth, founded upon Mr. Knight's labours, could easily be put into the smallest of these volumes. In Mr. Grosart's edition of the prose works of Wordsworth the autobiographical memoranda occupy but six pages of large print, and the poet would hardly have sanctioned any such voluminous record as Mr. Knight's. While much that he has given us was worthy of

publication, yet a not inconsiderable part is either unworthy the dignity of print, or irrelevant, or both. Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal is mostly a bare diary, utterly commonplace, and as devoid of quality as entries in an account book. For instance, she records under date of March 11th, 1798 :—

“A cold day. The children went down toward the sea. William and I walked to the top of the hills above Hopford. Met the blacksmith. Pleasant to see the labourer on Sunday jump with the friskness of a cow upon a sunny day.”

However, by the aid of this and similar documents we can come very near to Wordsworth and his surroundings. We see a tall, spare figure, with an old blue cloak about the shoulders, walking the country roads. His heavy-browed head is bent, and his eyes are fastened upon the ground. When those eyes looked up, they seemed to Leigh Hunt “likes fires half burning, half smouldering, with a sort of acrid fixture of regard, and seated at the further end of two caverns.” But for the most part he is mumbling his verses, and so absorbed that he notices no one. The country folk look at him askance, and the boys and girls are afraid. As one of his rustic neighbours expressed it, “I’ve knoan folks, village lads and lasses, coming over by old road

above which runs from Grasmere to Rydal, flayt a'most to death there by Wishing Gaate to hear the girt voice a groanin' and thunderin' of a still evenin'." (Vol. ii. p. 363.)

At Dove Cottage the poet gives himself to reading and composing, to conversation with his sister and his friends, especially Coleridge. Meals are most irregular when the spell of work is on him, and Dorothy once records that she kept dinner waiting till four o'clock. Sometimes he composed at meals. For a Sunday morning in February, 1802, we read this entry in the journal:—

"William . . . got up at nine o'clock . . . and while we were at breakfast . . . he wrote the poem, 'To a Butterfly!' He ate not a morsel, but sate with his shirt neck unbuttoned, and his waistcoat open while he did it. . . . I wrote it down and the other poems, and I read them all over to him. . . . William began to try to alter the 'Butterfly,' and tired himself." (Vol. i. p. 299.) He evolves his poems with great slowness and pain, and we are often told that William was wearied in composing, or fatigued himself in altering. Occasionally he works about his place, digs in the garden, or chops wood in the orchard.

But all these homely details, while they convince us that Wordsworth was made of common clay, detract rather than add to our appreciation of his poetry. The man hides the poet. The contemporary judgments of great works are often inadequate because this personal element enters ; the man stands in the way of his own art, and as a mortal, having so much in common with other mortals, the value of his work *per se* is obscured. When the background, accessories, and whole *milieu* fade away, the truly great historical figure grows continually for the imagination, which always delineates the man from his best work. We feel the overtowering greatness of Shakespere as the greatest artist of modern times, but to his contemporaries he was only a man among men, his everyday personality shadowing the uniqueness of his genius. But fortunately we have lost the mortal man, and the true lover of Shakespere would not resuscitate him if he could. We do not need to be convinced by minute details of commonplace existence that our great artists are human. That Keats took snuff, that Wordsworth disliked veal, but was fond of a leg of mutton, this concerns us not ; but we do wish to know the poetry, and the poet in his poetry. Wordsworth has told us all he thought worth knowing in the "Prelude" and

"Excursion," and in his poetry as a whole, which is everywhere lyric and autobiographic.

Mr. Knight has adopted the chronological order in the arrangement of Wordsworth's poems. This has a value indeed, but one which may easily be exaggerated in this age of historical criticism. The order of production, even when ascertainable, interests few save literary historians, and rarely throws light on the poems themselves. Time of composition is in general a dry and unimportant fact, and the chronological arrangement often dislocates poems akin in spirit, subject, and method. We may read a nature poem or two, and be getting in the mood for appreciating Wordsworth's interpretation, when by chronological sequence we may be diverted and distracted by a patriotic or love poem. Wordsworth's own principle, according to the faculty of mind addressed, or Matthew Arnold's classification by form, are somewhat better than either the chronological or local, but yet they often separate productions which naturally belong together. In truth, the arrangement of poems, so as to give the most natural and pleasing transitions and a climactic growth of interest, is itself a fine art allied to dramatic construction. For the satisfaction of the reader—and as poetry is for reading and not for tabula-

tion, this is the true point of view—a subject order freely interpreted is the most desirable, and it would have been quite sufficient, even in Mr. Knight's elaborate edition, to have indicated in the table of contents the time and place of composition of each poem.

To turn to the chief characteristics of Wordsworth as a poet we see first of all that he is pre-eminently a *genre* artist. Low life, the pedlar, beggar, peasant, and shepherd is treated with a simple force and truth quite remote from the style of classic pastoral verse, or from the realistic manner of our own time. He, indeed, builds on facts, yet selects and interprets them so that the humblest lives acquire a statuesque dignity and repose entirely unattainable by any realistic method. How far he was idealistic will be apparent to any one who compares the poem, "The Leech-Gatherer," with the exact prosaic record in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal. His poetry is the expression of a thoughtful mind who studies with loving minuteness of care the fundamental elements of human nature as revealed in the lowliest and most neglected. Wordsworth is also eminently *genre* in his treatment of external nature. He sings not of the rose or lily, but of the daisy, primrose, and celandine; not of the lofty moun-

tain or the boundless ocean, but of the small river and the gentle hill. By wayside, hillside, and streamside he finds inspiration for his best and most characteristic poems. With Shelley we fly on eagle wings in pure ether, but with Wordsworth we walk afield, and joy in grass and flowers and birds.

Wordsworth is the master of moral beauty. He is never swayed by a licentious passion for the beautiful for its own sake. He does not long to pass into a Nirvana of sensuous and imaginative delight, to be lapped in soft Lydian airs; but he elevates his soul to high and ennobling activity. Nor does he, like Goethe, seek experience for Art's sake. Wordsworth valued Art only as strengthening and elevating Life; Goethe sought experience merely as a stimulant to art expression. Wordsworth cultivated Art for Life, Goethe Life for Art; and this antipodal relation explains the invincible repugnance which Wordsworth always manifested to Goethe and his works. With Wordsworth it was not Art for Art's sake, but Art for Life's sake, and he had neither understanding of nor sympathy with pure Art or pure Science. He sought the Beautiful and the True only as a means of purifying, ennobling, and sanctifying character. He was early convinced that a mine of moral beauty,

unheeded and unsuspected by literary artists, lay hid in the commonest and humblest objects, and he devoted himself to disclosing and exhibiting this treasure with a strenuousness and perseverance perhaps unparalleled in the history of poetry. He elicits a wealth of spiritual beauty from the most unlikely things, and reveals the heaven which lies beneath our feet.

In our day Art, like other factors in modern culture, has achieved independence from her old masters, Religion and Morality, but has become practically a slave to Science, who is lord of our civilization, and a hard taskmaster. But be this as it may, when we say that Art is now free of morals—is neither moral nor immoral, but simply unmoral or *extra* moral—we mean, if we think rightly, that Art is no longer bound to a moral aim, though still subject to a moral standard; it need not aim at morality, but must conform to morality. It is useless to urge that Art has or can have nothing to do with morals. Art springs from life, and returns to it. Thoughts, imaginations, and feelings are, in a true and high sense, actions, and they determine, positively or negatively, those actions in society which we term conduct. Art cannot be neutral as regards morality any more than as regards truth; whatever its intent, it is either true or untrue to reality, and either moral or

immoral in its influence upon the inward and outward life of man.

In both intent and influence Wordsworth was profoundly moral and humanitarian. He was no devotee of an art which exalts itself to the exclusion of all other standards or interests, which counts morality and religion as subjects of art, it may be, but never as its objects. A pure æstheticism, dwelling apart in its esoteric shell, and adoring itself alone, was entirely repellent to him. Nor did he favour a photographic realism which would mirror things mechanically and perfectly without selection, or exaggeration, without interpretative or emotional bias. Wordsworth, indeed, loved reality, and was often too eager for facts; but still he rendered things as they seemed to him, guided by the strongest imagination, noblest feeling, and deepest thought. Firmly believing that things were as they seemed to him, he built his temple of Art upon the True and the Good, convinced that these were the foundation stones of eternal Beauty. Too often the passion for truth and goodness overpowers him, and he becomes a mere artisan, a teacher or preacher; but when the sense of beauty is the moving and constructive motive, when it, balanced and strengthened in tone by intellectual enthusiasm and

moral ardour, suffuses his whole being, then he rises to the highest levels of poetic art, and gives us the finest creations of his genius.

While Wordsworth is to some extent imperfect in humour, passion, and style, he is not, I think, peculiarly unfortunate in these respects. Few artists, indeed, possess all these qualities in anything like Shakesperean measure. In Shakespere only, of English poets, do we observe just proportion and harmonious interaction of all elements. He alone achieves the perfect poise of absolute art. Passion without humour is ridiculous, without style is bombastic; humour without passion is trifling, without style is vulgar; style without passion is artificial, without humour is arid; but when the miraculous blending of passion, humour, and style is effected by the transfiguring power of a transcendent imagination, the work of the artist genius, a Shakespere or a Goethe, is made manifest. For all underlings, however, there is inferiority everywhere, and a grave defect somewhere. With Wordsworth the great and grave defect is not in humour, passion, or style, but in imagination. It is chiefly owing to failure in the "vision and faculty divine" that his work is too often that of a clever, patient artisan, and not that of a real artist. He lacks that perennial flow of imaginative

force which transforms all materials in a perfectly large and free manner. The fountain of his poetic nature was too choked with over-much reasoning and reflection, with over-much moral insight and sympathy, to be completely at the command of an absolutely pure and dominant poetic impulse. The spring of his muse is intermittent, and between times we find only dry sand and stones. A poet should not teach or preach; Wordsworth does both and cannot help it. But when the most refractory of all elements, deep thought and profound moral aspiration, stand, not by themselves, but sublimed by a glowing feeling for beauty, Wordsworth reaches the highest poetic success. This he accomplishes in the famous "Ode on Immortality," in the Preface to the "Excursion," in such sonnets as that beginning "The world is too much with us," and in such pastorals as "Michael," "Ruth," and the "Cumberland Beggar."

As man and artist Wordsworth is commonly reproached with three great faults; lack of humour, of passion, and of artistic finish. I would not deny that there is a certain truth in such charges, but still Wordsworth is generally misunderstood in these respects, and his greatest and most salient defect is none of these.

Even if lack of humour be such a mortal sin as many assert—a point not difficult to dispute—there is considerable evidence that Wordsworth was not deficient in this regard. He could laugh heartily at humorous remarks by others, as, for instance, when a companion quoted to him, after repeated useless knocks at a house door in London, his own verse, “Dear God! the very houses seem asleep.” He could also make a very respectable joke himself. Witness the remark made with reference to an amusing society man as going to the Queen’s masked ball disguised as Chaucer. “What!” exclaimed Wordsworth, “Milnes go as Chaucer! Then it only remains for me to go as Milnes!” Who that has read the delightful stanzas written in Thomson’s “Castle of Indolence” can doubt Wordsworth’s ability to be sportive when occasion offers? No more genial pleasantry can be found in the language. It needs no apology that Wordsworth was not a wit, a humorist, a jolly good fellow, like his friend Charles Lamb. Wordsworth was a far too earnest, and I may say too great a man, to be continually seeing the funny side of things, and, as he did not adapt himself to those who do, he occasionally stumbles. We acknowledge that even for the sympathetic reader, who does

not see the humorous on the slightest pretext, he sometimes steps very suddenly from the sublime to the ridiculous; yet this must be accounted of very secondary importance, a defect, but by no means so vital as usually represented.

A far more serious fault alleged by critics is that Wordsworth has little passion; that he lacks so greatly in emotional heat that we have more smoke than fire. It is plain, indeed, that he glows with no sensual passion, and is never kindled by mere sensuous beauty. The common treatment of the tender passion was repugnant to him, and he even disapproved of Coleridge's "Genevieve" as being too sensual! Wordsworth was a prude and a Puritan, and he carried his hatred of the world, the flesh, and the devil, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, to the greatest lengths. He bitterly hated all art which in any wise touches on such themes. But Wordsworth was subject to strong emotions; fiery indignation, fervent affection, and poignant grief, he can experience, and occasionally he is even willing to give them expression, though with a very grave restraint, far removed from the dithyrambic fashion. He does not tear his heart-strings in public, and display his Laokoön agony like Byron; but feeling of a very real and vehement kind he does

express, and that most powerfully and vividly. An awful depth of dazed despair is drawn with touching force in the wonderful lines beginning—

“A slumber did my spirit seal.”

The matchless pathos of “Michael” is given with a simplicity and repose which constitute its perfection. Those most intimate with Wordsworth, as Crabb Robinson and Aubrey de Vere, fully recognised the power of passion which dwelt in him. But the object of his poetry was to quiet, not to arouse the soul, to elevate it to regions of eternal calm, not to involve it in storms and whirlwinds. This limit is self-imposed, and does not come from any narrowness in his own nature. Sensationalism and conventionalism were for him Scylla and Charybdis, and between these he safely and securely steered his way. In any true and high sense Wordsworth cannot be accused of lack of passion, of deficiency in strength and depth of emotion; but his feeling for truth, for sincerity and uprightness, for moral beauty and law, for the poor, for his country, for all that is simply noble in nature and life, was profound and absorbing, and in his best poems he expresses such feelings with elemental force and clearness.

Nor, again, is Wordsworth rightly reproached with lack of artistic labour and finish, as the great defect in his verse. Since his time the standard of literary technique has been so greatly raised, especially by Tennyson's flawless workmanship, that we unconsciously tend to judge the past unfairly. However, for his own time, and in his own style, Wordsworth is a careful and good workman. He maintained that in his craft Shelley only, among contemporary poets, excelled him, and the judgment is not far wrong. He aimed high and he toiled unweariedly to attain his end. Often he no sooner composed a poem than he began to recast. Often, alas! he only pottered. But considering the quantity of his work and the nature of his themes, he does not conspicuously fail in poetic art. He attempts no luxuries of style; hyphenated epithets, niceties and complexities of rhyme and rhythm, subtle and super-refined studies in word-music and word-colour—all these he knows not. Unlike many of our latter-day poets he is not a fastidious stylist, but still he attains to the full that magic and incommunicable quality, that distinctive and noble mode of utterance which we term style; and his most representative verse, for itself and in its own kind, has that

smoothness, simplicity, and completeness of finish which characterize a classic.

Wordsworth made no pretension to being a prose writer, and he has left little in prose worthy the name of literature. Owing to his weak eyesight he was unable to devote much attention to his correspondence, and his letters are for the most part poor and perfunctory. Tom Moore recalls Wordsworth as saying he had such a horror of having his letters preserved that he took pains to make them as bad and dull as possible. He certainly succeeded in the badness and dulness, but not in securing them from preservation and publication. Occasionally, when Wordsworth is once thoroughly roused—a rare thing—he can write with great force and point. Witness his letter to Lady Beaumont on the slighting reception given to his early poems. Referring to the disapproval expressed by the great mass of critics and readers, he says:—

“These people, in the senseless hurry of their idle lives, do not read books, they merely snatch a glance at them, that they may talk about them. And even if this were not so, never forget what, I believe, was observed to you by Coleridge, that every great and original writer, in proportion as he is great or original,

must create the taste by which he is to be relished; he must teach the art by which he is to be seen; this in a certain degree, to all persons, however wise and pure may be their lives, and however unvitiated their taste. But for those who dip into books in order to give an opinion of them, or talk about them in order to take up an opinion—for this multitude of unhappy and misguided beings an entire regeneration must be produced: and if this be possible, it must be a work of *time*. To conclude, my ears are stone-dead to this idle buzz, and my flesh as insensible as iron to these petty stings.”

But it is in the Essays on Poetry prefixed to early editions of his poems that we find the best specimens of Wordsworth’s prose. These essays deserve to be more generally read, both for their style and substance. Short and slight as they are, they have such originality and strength of thought and such force and distinction of style as to clearly entitle the writer to a niche, small and modest, in the temple of English prose writers. No finer passage of elevated impassioned prose exists in our language than the magnificent vindication of poetry in the essay on the “Principles of Poetry.” I quote his noble words on “Poetry and Science”:—

“The knowledge both of the poet and the man of science is pleasure: but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and inalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The man of science sees truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science. Emphatically may it be said of the poet, as Shakspeare hath said of man, ‘that he looks before and after.’ He is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs; in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed; the poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of the poet’s thoughts are

everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge, it is as immortal as the heart of man."

This extract with the context is, I think, greatly superior in largeness of conception and execution to any passage in either Sidney's or Shelley's "Defence of Poetry." It is evident that Wordsworth had capacity for prose of the very highest order; but he did not hold a facile pen for prose or verse, and it is only in exceptionally happy moments that he attains full and perfect expression in either. If by some spell of a god or demon his soul could always have been kept at glowing heat he would have been unsurpassable as either poet or prosaist.

What is the secret of Wordsworth's continually increasing power over cultivated minds? Why does the humble and austere bard draw a more and more numerous following among the best educated and the most thoughtful? Certain it is that men do not fall in love with him at first sight. He has no form or comeliness that they should desire him; he has not winsome speech, nor suave manners, nor prepossessing appear-

ance ; mean in outward guise, simple and even awkward in manners, he repels at first ; but still, by some strange magic, if we press the acquaintance he invariably becomes a bosom friend. However remote Wordsworth may seem to be from the latest forms of thought and feeling, from the latest developments of culture and civilization, however unsympathetic with the more conspicuous but really superficial mode of the modern spirit, still he does reach, and reach powerfully, many of the best and most progressive minds of our time. Amid so much that is relaxing, depressing, and enervating in art and life, Wordsworth's poetry acts upon the receptive reader as a powerful tonic. He relieves us from lassitude, he raises us from dejection ; but he accomplishes this healing by no intoxicating or soothing potion. His poetry is not a narcotic to benumb our faculties, and to enable us in our self-weariness to shuffle off our individuality and lose ourselves in dream or delirium. Wordsworth stimulates our best selfhood, he strengthens us for faith and duty, he urges to highest resolve and noblest endeavour. We turn and return to him, and we are invigorated and cheered, we are ennobled and sanctified ; life is purified and sweetened at its fountain head. His poetry never palls, it ever has the freshness of Nature herself ; and again and again in the

weariness of life, discouraged by doubt, dismayed by the inrush of grovelling sensuality around us and within us, we always find in him an inspiration of moral beauty to refresh and recreate the soul. Sick at heart by reason of the incessant din and strife of a jangling world, he lifts us and bears us far from the hot and hasting crowd to regions of eternal calm and peace.

When fevered by the ceaseless rush and roar
Of this insatiate age, when faint, distressed,
Thou seek'st a brook in quiet shade to rest
And meditate on Nature's sweetest lore ;
In Wordsworth find a fount that pure doth pour
Clear rills of poesy : here be refresh'd,
Here glad thy heart, here quick renew thy zest
For all that's noble, true, for evermore.
O Wordsworth ! bard and prophet, spirit strong,
Yet beautiful as strong, thy constant flow
Of simple, unobtrusive, deep-toned song
Shall fill wide earth, to farthest bound shall go,
And endless-moving time shall sure prolong
Thy chant in all its reach from high to low.

IV.

Mansfield Park

HOW well I recall the greatest literary pleasure of my life, its time and place! A dreary winter's day without, within a generous heat and glow from the flaming grate, and I reclining at my ease on the library lounge, *Mansfield Park* in hand. Then succeed four solid hours of literary bliss, and an absorption so great that when I mechanically close the book at the last page it is only by the severest effort that I come back to the real world of pleasant indoors and bleak outdoors. I was amazed that I, a hardened fiction reader, should be so transported by this gentle tale of Miss Austen's, and yet I enjoyed to the full the after-taste of her perfect realistic art.

This first enthusiasm, however, soon abated, and I began to see flaws, to note the prolixity and unevenness of the work, and to feel that it was almost school-girlish in tone and sentiment. While the verisimilitude is,

indeed, fascinating, the realization is far from profound. And the characters are too onesided for full human beings—are only puppets, each pulled by a single string. Edmund Bertram is, perhaps, the most woodeny of these marionettes. Lady Bertram, the languid beauty, seems often overdrawn. Mrs. Norris is a perfect busybody, but a pettiness so absolutely consistent at length rouses our suspicions and irritates us. We feel that human nature, outside of the madhouse, does not fulfil the single types so completely.

But in Fanny Price we find no flaw of artistic presentment. Here comes before our eyes a real, a free, a complex human being, in whose veins, as Gautier remarks of Balzac's characters, "runs a true red blood, instead of ink, which common authors pour into their creations." Further, I am acquainted with no more charming figure in fiction than Fanny; she is so completely, perfectly, deliciously feminine in instinct, feeling, manner, and intelligence, and in every way a most engaging revelation of a budding womanliness. This womanliness, slightly *bourgeoise*, perhaps, but never vulgar or gross, depicted so surely and delicately, is, I think, the element in Miss Austen's work which chiefly attracts the masculine mind, and which delighted Macaulay, Scott, Guizot, Whately, and Coleridge.

Masson reports that he had known the most hard-headed men in ecstasies with it, and that the only objection as brought against it by ladies is that it reveals too many of their secrets. Jane Austen certainly accomplishes the delineation of the character of Fanny with a fascinating, unobtrusive fidelity to feminine nature, and with a clearness and wholeness in the creation, minaturely Shakesperean.

I cannot resist the impression that in Fanny Miss Austen has in large measure written down herself. Certain it is that both show the same gentle and true femininity, the same domestic kindliness, the same delicacy of perception, and the same sensitiveness. Both are fond of dancing, and the ball episode in *Mansfield Park*, a masterpiece of quiet realism, takes, no doubt, much of its colouring from Miss Austen's own disposition and experience. Both likewise delight in the drama, and are keenly sensitive to natural beauty.

The situation in *Mansfield Park* is the most interesting imaginable. Fanny is in love with her cousin Edmund, but he treats her and confides to her as a brother, while he himself, in entire ignorance of Fanny's feelings, is in love with Mary Crawford. The womanly reserve of Fanny in concealing her affection

under the severest trials—as when Edmund seeks her sympathy in his own love affair—is most skilfully depicted. Meanwhile Henry Crawford starts a flirtation with Fanny, telling his sister that he means to make “a small hole in Fanny Price’s heart”; but this ends in Fanny, unknown to herself, making a very large hole in Crawford’s heart. This complex of cross purposes is worked out with the greatest truth and delicacy.

If I were to select a single passage to illustrate these remarks on the delightful artistic quality of *Mansfield Park*, I should choose the opening pages of Chapter XXIV., where Henry Crawford talks with his sister about his proposed flirtation with Fanny; but I think even a few sentences will illustrate Miss Austen’s wonderful skill.

“I do not quite know,” says Henry Crawford, “what to make of Miss Fanny. I do not understand her. I could not tell what she would be at yesterday. What is her character? Is she solemn? Is she queer? Is she prudish? Why did she draw back, and look so grave at me? I could hardly get her to speak. I never was so long in company with a girl in my life—trying to entertain her—and succeeded so ill! Never met with a girl who looked so grave on me! I must

try to get the better of this. Her looks say, 'I will not like you, I am determined not to like you,' and I say she shall."

"Foolish fellow! And so this is her attraction after all! This it is—her not caring about you—which gives her such a soft skin, and makes her so much taller, and produces all these charms and graces! I do desire that you will not be making her really unhappy; a *little* love perhaps may animate and do her good, but I will not have you plunge her deep, for she is as good a little creature as ever lived, and has a great deal of feeling."

"It can be but for a fortnight," said Henry, "and if a fortnight can kill her, she must have a constitution which nothing could save. No, I will not do her any harm, dear little soul! I only want her to look kindly on me, to give me smiles as well as blushes, to keep a chair for me by herself wherever we are, and be all animation when I take it and talk to her; to think as I think, be interested in all my possessions and pleasures, try to keep me longer at Mansfield, and feel when I go away that she shall never be happy again. I want nothing more."

"Moderation itself!" said Mary. "I can have no scruples now."

Surely this is a charming bit of characterization, and it is but one of many, equally lively and lifelike.

Not the least pleasing of Miss Austen's touches are her confidential "asides" to the reader, as when mentioning Fanny's idea that repeated discouragement would in time put an end to Crawford's infatuation, she says to the reader, "How much time she might, in her own fancy, allot for its dominion is another concern. It would not be fair to inquire into a young lady's exact estimate of her own perfections," a thoroughly feminine remark, and one most characteristic of Jane Austen.

While Jane Austen is always a consistent realist, yet she is never unfeelingly objective and harshly photographic, as is too often the case with our latter-day realists, like De Maupassant and Howells, whose art, often hard and laboured, whose incessant conscious straining to realize, only repel and weary us. Miss Austen's work in the main shows a spontaneity of touch and a sympathetic quality in the very acuteness of its analysis which is peculiarly engaging. Not so much by set rule as by sheer insight and intuitive grasp, she achieves verisimilitude without taint of improbability or unreality. How perfectly she gives us the atmosphere of Mansfield Park! How well we realize the

leisurely life of the good people there, the men hunting, lounging, and making love; the women talking, embroidering, and falling in love; and yet both being entirely free from stupidity and stolidity! Jane Austen may be only one of the little masters of realism, yet in giving the *milieu* she is excelled by no novelist—no, not even by Balzac. And further, if with Schopenhauer we define the function of the novelist to be not in relating great events but in making small ones interesting, then Miss Austen in *Mansfield Park* is quite unsurpassed.

V.

Realism

GOETHE, in one of his delightful dialogues on Art, compares the amateur, who wishes a work of art to be a *fac-simile* of nature in order that he may enjoy it in a thoroughly natural way, to the pet ape who was found eagerly examining the plates in a Natural History, and greedily devouring the pictured beetles. The comparison is harsh but just. The amateur who seeks in art merely an illusion of reality is essentially vulgar in that he degrades art to an apish foolery. A picture so realistic that we take it for the reality pictured is no more fine art than a mirror so clear that we crash into it by mistake. The pictorial forgery of nature which deceives the expert is, of course, a marvel, produced, however, not by the artist but by the artisan, and so more fit for the dime museum than for the art gallery. Such a production was the five-dollar bill which was portrayed on canvas so realisti-

cally as to deceive even connoisseurs. At the best this is but the bastard offspring of art, sustaining to it much the same relation as ventriloquism to oratory, or onomatopoetic jingle to poetry; and while this realistic artifice will always gain the plaudits of the Philistine host, it will ever be discriminated from true art by the intelligent amateur.

The imitative realism which manufactures marvels of illusion is obviously more difficult in some arts than in others, but most difficult of all in that least concrete of arts, literature. Written words are at a double remove from reality, being but signs of signs, arbitrary signs to recall articulate sounds which stand for ideas and feelings. While it is hard for the orator and elocutionist to make the spoken word deceive sense, it is doubly hard for the poet and prosaist who employ only the written word. Yet certain word-artists, onomatopoetists, attain a naturalistic vividness, and come as near as possible to the concrete and real by using a vocabulary and phraseology in which the sound of the word, mentally interpreted and pronounced, reflects the sound nature of the thing denominated, and thus tends to deceive the sense, as we may see in Southey's *Falls of Lodore*. With these writers literature too often degenerates into mere studies in

those word-sounds which, having direct sense connection and association, can bring the sensible vividly to mind. Swinburne, Rossetti, and occasionally Tennyson, show a tendency to this form of realism.

Mere imitative realism as seeking to deceive, to make us take the representation for the thing represented, is obviously the lowest form of realism. A higher form of realism is that which aims not at a perfect mimicry of reality, but at a perfect record. Its object is to make a complete and accurate register of all the facts, to give a perfect *verbatim* report, which is to be appreciated merely as such. This bare record of facts is by no means intended to give the effect of reality but only the sense of fidelity to reality; it would not lead us to take the art work for the model, but it would impress us with the accuracy with which the model is observed and all its points set down. The facts, all the facts, and nothing but the facts, is the motto of this realism. The thorough-going realist allows no selection, no toning down, no touching up, no interpretation, intellectual or emotional, but insists that art, literary or pictorial, must minutely register all the facts. Such indiscriminating realism we see in some of Tolstoi's novels, where nothing is too trifling or too disgusting to be omitted,

but all is given with photographic fulness: where descriptions become inventories, scenes, interviews, and characters, persons.

It may be interesting to note whither all this passion for reality in the gross, for getting full and direct account of facts, and thus a strong impression of reality, is tending to lead art. If literature is to give the liveliest assurance of its adherence to the actual, it must do more than found itself on fact, it must directly transcribe facts. Hence, as the longing for the real becomes more and more exacting, we may expect every novel to be prefaced by an affidavit that every word has been taken from the actual life by phonographic record, and it must attest descriptions by photographs, thus making the whole legally and scientifically verifiable. We shall then be besieged at every turn by the *littérateur*, eager for material, and armed with camera and phonograph. Hidden automatic machines will catch the unwary in every word and act: walls will have ears and ceilings eyes, and even the billows of the sea may be fitted with apparatus to register every object and sound coming within range. But not only will sights and sounds be accurately recorded for the use of the artist of the future, but also tastes, odours, and sensations of touch; in short, the whole sense-life

of man and all which finds expression through it will thus become available. In the coming age of science a contrivance will accompany every individual from birth to death to fully record the whole life of action and sensation, so that we may be enabled to re-enact any life experience in its absolute entirety. And not merely the individual, but, through composite photographs, phonograms, and so forth, the type also will be perfectly set forth. By such means we shall obtain a general picture of humanity far more true to fact than Shakespeare's, and a "*Comedie Humaine*" infinitely surpassing Balzac's.

But while the direct record and reproduction of what has happened does to some extent please the lover of reality, he most of all longs to be put in direct connection with what is now happening. The average man will always prefer to become directly acquainted with events as they occur, rather than to renew them after they have occurred, no matter how exact the reproduction may be. In general, interest dulls according to the degree of remoteness of the object in time and space. To hear by telephone is not so interesting as to hear directly, to see through a telescope is not so satisfactory as to see with the naked eye. It is more exciting to be present at a fire than to read about one

in progress in a distant city, and this in turn is more exciting than to read about a fire which happened years since. So while the modern man, absorbed in the passion for reality, finds a certain satisfaction in the telegraphic news of the daily paper, his chief pleasure is travel. Travel tends to supplant literature by helping everyone to widen his experience in the most direct way and with the strongest sense of reality, namely, the evidence of his own senses. Even now the earth is so betravelled that romance flies to future ages and to other worlds. And our own facilities for travel, marvellous though they are, will doubtless seem very inferior to the cosmopolitan of a century hence.

In the near future will also be perfected all those extensions of sense to distance by mechanical means which are the best substitutes for direct experience of the real. Mr. Ruskin, in one of his realistic moods, declares that any sensible person would exchange a picture of Chamouni for a window which would, without any tedious travel, give him the view at all times. Now, invention will surely supply this window, and thus do away with the necessity for the picture or description by establishing actual sense connection with any object at any distance. We have already done this in a measure for sound; but in the near

future we shall not only hear to any distance, but also see, smell, touch, and taste. A man will then, without rising from his chair, virtually make the round of the globe. In the course of a few hours he will glance at the art treasures of the Louvre, will hear a solo from Parsifal at Bayreuth, will enjoy the view from the summit of Mont Blanc, will visit St. Peter's, will hear the Muezzin's call to prayer at Cairo and see the pyramids, will behold the dazzling glories of the Taj, will inspect a curio shop in Tokio, will look at the marvels of the Yosemite and Yellowstone Park, will hear the thunderous roar of Niagara; he will also taste the delicious fruits of the tropics, smell the fragrance of the sweetest flowers of temperate climes, and touch the softest fabrics of the Orient; still more, he will see the interesting men of his time, will shake hands and converse with dignitaries, authors, politicians, with men great and low, with the most rude and cultivated in all parts of the earth; all this and perhaps much more will, if we may judge from present indications, be accomplished by the man of the twenty-first century in a few hours, and that without rising from his easy chair in his own home. The promise and potency of much of this lies in present achievements, but the insatiate craving for realization will doubtless ulti-

mately lead far beyond the power of our imagination to conceive. Literature and art, no matter how pungently realistic, must ever fail in competition with the resources of mechanical invention, which will ultimately secure to man a practical omnipresence, and thus supplant fine art, which is esteemed by most only the next best thing in default of the actual. And the supplying the actual is, in truth, what is commonly meant by realism, namely, that the real thing takes the place of the representation, as when in a scene on the stage a real goat is used instead of a stage property. Thus the sense of reality is quickened by substituting presentation for representation, nature for art. And if the theatre be carried out upon the realistic scheme, which has already been introduced in the eidoscope, it would be merely a place where an assembly could as a unit be brought into manifold touch with actuality by means of mechanical contrivance, and thus extinguish scene painting, acting, and the dramatic art. So a novel on the same principle would be merely a graphophone rehearsing in your ears actual conversations.

Facts please the many simply by reason of their sheer force of reality; the crowd seek not the truth but the sensation in either reality or its transcript, and in consequence they perceive only appearances and

catch only impressions. There are those, however, who aim at a higher realism, who seek for the truth of things and the inner reality of facts. These demand not sight, but insight. The Realist of this school will neither deceptively imitate nor yet register all the facts in their natural order, but he will select and arrange facts so as to reveal the principle or law which underlies them. The novelist will thus select some theme, as jealousy, will note down what he sees and hears as illustrating this passion, and, selecting the most notable and striking facts, will deftly weave them into such a connected whole as will most strongly reveal the psychic laws of jealousy. Here then we have, as distinguished from deceptive and literal realism, a real composition—as we see in such a novel as *Madame Bovary*—not an indiscriminating massing of all the facts, but a real classification, selection, interpretation, and generalization.

The principle, however, of all this selection and manipulation is not æsthetic, but purely intellectual; the aim is to incarnate not beauty, but truth. This higher realism cannot be ruled by imagination, emotion, or individuality, for all these go beyond the truth of things. Thus imagination magnifies, minifies, and distorts reality both as fact and law. At the most

imagination has its own order of facts in a dreamland far from the real world. Imagination and fancy lead us astray from the bounds of objective truth into fields which are fair, indeed, but which ought always to be barred from true art; and so, instead of the pleasant realms of shade and mystery where imagination sports, realism would give us wide plains garish with noonday glare. And this realist cannot be impelled by feeling or appeal to feeling, but he aims solely to make understand how men feel. So the novelist, as Guy de Maupassant informs us, should not "tell a story to amuse us, or to appeal to our feelings, but to compel us to reflect and to understand the occult and deeper meaning of events." The personal equation must also—as in all scientific work—be eliminated, for nothing distorts reality worse; and so art becomes cold and juiceless, entirely lacking that delicious flavour of individuality which delights and stimulates the mind.

By selective or scientific realist I mean then any artist who patterns after realistic science in setting forth and explaining facts in a wholly unimaginative, unemotional, impersonal manner. Such is the novelist who tells his story, not for its own sake, but merely as a concrete psychological or sociological study. He aims to group facts in such a setting that they shall

explain themselves, and give the impression of absolute fidelity to the inner and deeper reality of things. And the French realistic novelists select the most cleverly, and are the most attentive to unity; once they seize upon a motive, everything extraneous is rigidly excluded. They trace with the utmost thoroughness and patience the evolution of a single theme, but we miss the manifoldness and complexity of human nature; we do not see life as a whole, but only in a minute cross section. The characters in their novels are but puppets, which move only by a single string. The French novelist reaches a severe unity which often borders on narrowness, but he cannot attain in his selection and treatment that purely scientific impartiality at which he aims. Whatever his theory, his sense of technique is so strong, his imagination and feeling so powerful, his individuality so dominant, that his novel is not, and cannot be, scientific and cosmopolitan, but is always very artistic and Gallic. Thus it is that the criminology of Zola differs from that of Lombroso, for example, who has criticized Zola from the scientific point of view with acuteness. Zola is always Zolaesque, the personal equation and the race characteristic is always unmistakeably prominent in him, as in all Frenchmen. It is not then the rather meagre and uncertain knowledge

of actual life which is our great gain from French fiction, but rather a dramatic unity and power in the unfolding of moods, and in the depicting of human types.

And what we have said of the French realists as vainly aiming at a perfect objectivity is also true to a large degree for all realists. And yet the aim gives a certain scientific tone to the production, and a certain quasi-science results. As illusory art ends in artifice, and literal, in mechanism, so selective realism ends in science. But where, then, is fine art? It disappears in all-devouring science. Literature and all art are indeed fast becoming simply special studies in biology, psychology, and sociology.

And yet if art be kin to any science it is not to these, but to mathematics. Both mathematics and art isolate factors of reality, or get only suggestions from reality, and carry them to legitimate conclusions in ideal spheres of their own. But mathematics is always general and abstract, art particular and concrete. And like all science, mathematics is cold and characterless, entirely eliminating the personal equation; whereas art as expression of emotion develops the characteristic.

Yes, indeed, says science, it is this very subjectivity of aim which must always be combated. The aim of

man is to understand nature and act accordingly. If man puts himself in his own light, if he sees all in the shadow he himself casts, he sees wrongly and imperfectly. Subjectivism is the vice of savage and half-civilized thought. Art arises in crude imaginings and obscure feelings, and its progress is but a refining of the vicious subjective interpretation which always deceives and misleads by bringing the outward world to the test and manipulation of unguided inward impulse. Art is an intoxicant, only a degree less vulgar than opium and alcohol, to beguile men into an impracticable foolish idealism. Grant that art seems pleasing and ennobling, yet it must be sacrificed if it hinder truth, and unfits us for stern realities. We wish to see reality face to face and undimmed by any veil, however lovely; unconcealed by any drapery, however graceful. Away with artistic mumming, religious theorizing, philosophic speculation, away with all anthropomorphic interpretations, all travesties of reality, and give us only unadorned naked truth! Æsthetic and religious emotion are but childish stages to be outgrown by the mature scientific age. In the modern world the dream of the artist and devotee are only useless survivals from earlier phases of culture. Hence if art, religion, or any other culture

factor is to be retained it must be made *scientific*; in other words, it must be absorbed by science in being made a medium for conveying the truth of objective reality.

Howbeit we have to ask in answer to this view of evolution, whether science is not itself a passing phase. How can it be exempt from the eternal flux? Has science alone finality? We trow not. Finality is impossible in any indefinite evolution: it is the illusion of every mind and every age, according to the special element which may be dominant; but we may well doubt the whole theory of successive phases, as propounded by Comte and others. It is more rational and scientific to suppose that culture is a whole of many permanent organs in its continuous development. As man in the course of his physical growth strengthens in heart and lungs, as well as brain, so in his psychical growth art and religion, as well as science, will have an ever-increasing function. Psychic life, like all life, is through a manifold of competing yet co-operating factors, which are at least six in number: the intellectual, science and philosophy, the emotional, religion and art, the volitional, ethics and politics. These are the main organs in civilization, which must ever grow with its growth. So when in the body of culture

some one organ, as religion in the Middle Ages or science in modern times, tends to become despotic and all-absorbing, we have an unhealthy, unprogressive hypertrophy. A thralldom to science which threatens to obstruct full and free human development is but a passing phenomenon in that struggle of culture-factors for supremacy which constitutes the higher life of man.

Science may, indeed, point to this fact, that art in its highest reaches is objective, as showing that art properly ends in science. And it is true that while art arises as subjective or lyric, in its latest stages it becomes objective or dramatic; but this dramatic objectivity is wholly distinct from the objectivity of science. The dramatist to be sure objectifies, but he does not aim at rigid adherence to the real, which he knows full well is both stupid and arid, but he develops types from the merest suggestions in reality, and achieves creations which are the quintessence of reality, yet infinitely superior to reality. We talk of Shakespere as the impersonal, myriad-minded dramatist, but his characters are far from being direct transcripts or selections of the life about him. Think you that a phonograph set in the Boar's Head Tavern, Eastcheap, would have preserved for us the poignant wit of Bar-

dolph, or the sublime *insouciance* of that prince of genial rascals, the incomparable Jack Falstaff? No, Shakespere's men and women rise as high above the vulgar reality of everyday life as Shakespere himself; they all partake of his ideal largeness, freedom, and force.

It is evident that realism in all its forms means the dominance of the objective. Imitative realism in counterfeiting reality, literal realism in recording reality, and selective realism in forming a composite picture of reality, all agree in predominance of objective motive. The realist, whatever his particular method, is always harking back to the external fact, is always restrained and guided by what seems to him the actual object, is always seeking, not to express himself, but to become merely a mirror of reality. And the justification of this point of view is that truth is all important, and that realism alone can give truth. But, if we may use such an expression, is this the true conception of truth? In a broad view any accord with a given standard is truth, even the standard of untruth, as when we say that a Cretan or a born liar is your only true liar. And why should the scientific standard, accord with actuality, dominate fine art? Science should be true by its own criterion and art by its own,

as when we judge that a musical note is true, not by some reality, but by the standard of the musical ideal. And fine art in all its branches can only be true in being true to itself. It creates its own facts and realities out of the rough material of common reality. It uses the real only as a ladder to climb to the ideal. Art knows its own realities as the best and most precious things in the universe.

And psychologically the distinction between the æsthetic and scientific spirit is very definite, as may be evident from one or two illustrations. Tyndall records that, on one of his ascents in the Alps for scientific purposes, on gaining the summit he was overcome by the beauty of the scene, and for some time the æsthetic feeling so dominated him that he was unable to go forward with his scientific observations. The expression of his sense of beauty was a piece of art, a prose poem, his expression of the scientific spirit an exact and clear statement of fact. Again, Darwin records, in the *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, his observations on a woman whom he saw weeping in obviously quite a different spirit from what a poet or painter would. The same incident is transfigured both as a text to scientific theory and as theme for the artist, but the distinctness of mental attitude is obvious

to the least introspection. The artistic and scientific interpretations of weeping are diverse in mode and product, and subserve diverse yet necessary functions in the economy of culture.

Art may, indeed, as slave of science, become only the register of facts and theories, but then it ceases to be art. In reality art owes no allegiance to science; science is not the law of its being, but only at the best a by-law. There has always been a standard of realism which art has found it necessary to respect on pain of becoming ridiculous. The portrait painter, who places the eyes where the mouth should be, would of course make it impossible for anyone to appreciate his art. But this realism which art must accept as a by-law is not the realism of science, but a common operation which, however, by the general diffusion of science is becoming more and more definite. Every age has its own measure of realism which the wise artist will always regard; but he will never accept realism as the controlling principle of his art. It has seemed to some that science and art mutually influence each other for the good of both. Thus speaks Flaubert: "The time of the beautiful has passed. Humanity free to return to it has nothing, for the present quarter of an hour, to do with it. The further it goes the more scientific will

art become, and in the same way science will be more artistic; the two after having been separated at the base will meet at the summit."

But there lies a contradiction between the passing of beauty and of science as becoming more artistic, which he does not stop to explain. We must also add that as evolution means differentiation, science and art must in their increasing specialization grow more and more apart. Men of science do not, as of old, begin and close their works with some expression of religious or artistic emotion. The beauty of science is at the best only that of a mathematical demonstration or of a fine surgical operation; that is, a severe and formal beauty which is unæsthetic, being merely the scientific sentiment rejoicing in itself.

The most that science can do for art is to suggest subjects for its idealization, and to emphasize the principle that the ideal should start from the real. Thus is constituted a mode of true art which may be termed realistic, in distinction from pure fancy and imagination. Merck's injunction to Goethe that he should "give a poetic form to the real" rather than "seek to give reality to the so-called poetic, to the imaginative," marks this distinction between idealizing the real and realizing the ideal. But

Merek certainly mistakes in calling the latter only "stupid stuff." The fairy story in literature and the *fantasia* in music have a true interest and value.

Another and distinct question of realism is as to how far art is restrained from realism, not merely by æsthetic reason, but by ethical. That is, we have to consider the much-vexed problem of the nude in art, and especially in literary art.

It must certainly be granted that the scope of literature and all art is universal. Real art—which is never realism—can seize upon any fact of life, can dramatically objectify it in its typical significance, and so dignify and glorify it. Art sounds all the depths as well as all the heights of life; it treats impartially the lowest animalism and the grossest crime as well as the loftiest aspiration and the noblest endeavour. The *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles, the *Cenci* of Shelley, the *La Terre* of Zola, are as truly works of art as the *Paradiso* of Dante, the *Imitation* of Thomas à Kempis, or Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Purely artistic appreciation of any of these carries no influence on the actions of life. Objective art is separate from life; it is a life of its own which stands wholly without the life it feeds on; to it all is spectacle. The artistic spirit, whether as creative or appreciative,

is merely a spectator of all that is generic and characteristic. Art even surveys and appreciates itself in the same calm, broad, impartial way.

But we come now to the second side of the problem, whether the dissemination of all literary art should be as universal as its scope. It is an obvious fact, and, indeed, a sad one, that art is mostly used for unartistic enjoyment, to stir every passion and emotion but the æsthetic. Anyone who watches, for instance, the crowds at the theatres, must feel this to be true. And so all art, literary, graphic, musical, as well as dramatic, is continually diverted from its true purpose, and is made to minister to reality rather than ideality. That the art of a novelist is thus swerved is not that artist's fault; that people read *La Terre* and *Jude the Obscure* to stimulate their passions rather than their æsthetic natures, does not, from one point of view, attach blame to the writers. Still, these novelists may well ask whether they should not respect the weakness of the grand majority to whom their writings may come, or whether other and less dangerous subjects may not give full development to their creativeness. Goethe knew well the universal scope of art, but he did not publish his freest productions, keeping them only for a few appreciative friends.

Zola appears to be an honest artist, but his novels, spread broadcast, have sown great corruption. Readers in general are unable to attain the free and calm objective spirit which such art demands; with them art is the servant of reality, the thought of evil becomes an evil thought. While to most the thought of murder may not be a murderous thought, yet the thought of lust is a lustful thought. It may be a reflection on our civilization, but it is still an undoubted fact, that though society has got beyond the danger-point as regards such a homicidal novel as Sienkiewicz's *Fire and Sword*, it yet feels most evil effects from such lustful novels as Zola's *La Terre*. While we acknowledge that Zolaism, as the art which flinches not at any human animalism and sexualism, has a certain theoretical vindication, yet we must consider its general circulation extremely noxious. It is a bit of stubborn Philistinism to decry real art of any kind, but it is a matter of common sense to keep art away from those who will only misuse it. Hence the crying need for some method of publication for the nude in literary art by which it will reach only those who are true artistic appreciators. Thus if the ideal and true art, whether from the nude or draped model, tends to realize in the one who studies it, this merely

shows imperfection of artistic sense in the student, or an inflammability either juvenile or morbid.

If we take the broadest view of realism we perceive that it is only a form of idealism. The realist's ideal is reality, to which he endeavours to strictly conform. But this ideal, like all ideals, is unattainable. Man cannot free himself of his individuality. A bare but perfect reflection of reality is only possible to mechanism ; and, on the other hand, perfect subjectivity is possible only to absolute spirit. But high art can only come as the expression of the highest life, and it cannot be said that the mere tracing and recording of actualities and their laws is life at its best. What, indeed, would either science or art be without a subject ! Hence both science and art are both secondary realities to the realities which make them possible. History is greater than the historian, and nature than the scientist or artist. And yet in human life art is the consummate flower, and science is the root ; but though the root grow in dirt the flower need not smear itself with the slime.

VI.

Education and the Future of Literature

THE immediate prospect for literature is not bright. Our civilization is daily becoming more democratic, the people draw all activities toward themselves; and the literary artist is more than ever tempted to be untrue to himself, to yield to the popular demand and truckle to the average taste. Style, as characteristic creativeness, as the expression of lofty individuality, is neither wanted nor appreciated by the great mass of readers. Your thorough-going democrat believes in complete equality, material and intellectual; and he who is unlike or peculiar is regarded as either foolish or conceited. The great host of self-assertive, self-satisfied people despise what they cannot understand, or jest at it. An illustration in hand is the recent vulgar skit, so universal in the newspapers (1890) about President Cleveland's hard lot in being obliged to hear Mr. Gilder read his latest poem. Such is

the *bourgeoise* temper. It may appreciate literary cleverness or smartness, but it will flout at talent and genius, at all sustained and dignified discourse and high poetic sentiment. In the hurry of this eager, unquiet, democratic age, if men read at all they will read only what appeals directly to them at the first glance, what is short to scrappiness and is startlingly *staccato* in expression. In brief, the democratization of literature means a childish impressionism.

And the natural language of impressionism is the newspaper, which promises to be the literary method of the future. In many newspapers we see already a tendency to cease being a mere impartial and accurate register of facts, and to aim at making news articles entertaining at all cost, often by an absurd and showy attempt at literary style, often also by the coarsest exaggeration. As Schopenhauer so well says, "Exaggeration of every kind is as essential to journalism as it is to the dramatic art, for the object of journalism is to make events go as far as possible. Thus it is that all journalists are, in the very nature of their calling, alarmists; and this is their way of giving interest to what they write. Herein they are like little dogs; if anything stirs, they immediately set up a shrill bark." Hence it is that our newspapers are for the

most part miserably unreliable, trivial, and vulgar, and the outlook for literature as dominated by the newspaper is melancholy in the extreme.

However, it is folly to lament this tendency with the pessimists, or, with Matthew Arnold, to rely hereafter upon a "saving remnant." Since literature is not, and is never likely to be, as in the past, a product for the few, since the kind of writing which the people demand is the kind of writing which will be done, the only hope of literature is an educated public. I take it, then, that the importance for literature itself of the right study of literature in our schools and universities can scarcely be overrated. But the results of present methods can hardly be regarded as satisfactory. Many of our college graduates and most of our high-school graduates read little more than that lowest form of literature, the newspaper. Not one in a hundred, in consulting his own taste, takes up an English classic, reads Milton and Shakespere and Wordsworth simply because he likes them. And certainly, for the great majority, school instruction in literature results in no marked and permanent uplifting of taste. I am far from saying that literary education is a complete failure, but I thoroughly believe that it is generally very defective in spirit and method.

The chief difficulty arises at bottom from a lack of practical realization of the true end of education as total process. The real object of education may be defined as a preparation for that largest, freest, most original development of the mind which is the goal of human evolution. And this development ever has been, and ever will be, distinctly fivefold: religious, moral, philosophic, scientific, and artistic—each in its own way, yet forming an interdependent organism of culture. A true education, as the vestibule of life, must contain all these forms as co-ordinate; every scheme of unprofessional education ought to realize these factors, each for its own sake, an ideal which is yet far before us. Just now *parvenu* science, crass, boorish, and overbearing, as the *parvenu* generally is, has got the upper hand in education. Hence we see in literary education, as everywhere else, the undue stress laid on the scientific method, and literature constantly and dominantly interpreted from the standpoints of anthropology, psychology, history, and philology. It is certainly interesting and useful to look at literary art from other standpoints than its own; but for the educative study of literature the main point of view must always be the purely æsthetic. To become surely sensitive to all kinds of artistic quality is far better

than gaining the exactest, most scientific information about books and authors. At a dessert of fine fruit I desire, not botanical knowledge, but taste and appetite, and so in reading a fine poem I wish not to know but to feel. What value to me that I know the name of the author, his school, the dates of his life, his technical method, but am stirred by no emotion of delight at beauty realized! I grant that some of our recent scientized art is so wholly intellectual and technical that it neither expresses nor appeals to emotion, but it thereby ceases to be fine art.

It was a slip of Matthew Arnold's in defining culture as the "knowing the best that has been thought and done in the world." Culture is not knowledge, but appreciativeness. It is a certain mode of feeling and sympathy which though based on knowledge is yet distinct therefrom. As wisdom is the practical fruit of knowledge, so culture is the æsthetic fruit of literary study. The prime object of literary education is not to inform the understanding, but to develop the taste, to lead the student to spontaneously recognise the best art whenever and wherever he finds it, and, what is more, to like it, yea, even to love it. Not one educated man in a hundred knows good literature when he sees it; he must rely upon some critic, or upon his know-

ledge as to the fame of the author, and straightway he will try to discover the beauties he has been taught to expect. But this is not genuine taste; the deeper and real life does not respond, and if emotion there be, it is wholly artificial. The student openly applauds what he is taught to applaud, but in secret he reads and praises the meretricious and sensational.

For the formation and development of a genuine individual taste the student should be led into direct and unbiased contact with the best art. He should not even know the author of the piece he is reading, but by repeated study should get a thoroughly original impression, and give expression to it orally or in writing before he receives any instruction. The free initiative and spontaneous interest must always be led up to and waited for. I would suggest giving a class a short poem for a half-hour's original study, and asking for written answers to such questions as: What lines please you most? Why? What is the strongest part of the poem? What the weakest? How does it compare with poems previously read? What would you judge as to the author from internal evidence? The student should gradually come to a knowledge of authorship from internal criticism alone, and the author should always be subordinated to his works,

That best art which is self-interpreting and simple in its æsthetic elements should mainly be used. After a measure of taste for the good art is definitely formed, examples of poor and bad literature should be interspersed for detection and criticism. If this appreciative direct study of literature were made the main method throughout the whole course of education, the ground covered would not be so great as now, but the results in the improvement of taste, and indirectly in the elevation of literature itself, would, I think, be far more considerable.

Many desire in a more or less vague way some acquaintance with the master works of master minds in literature, art and science, but fail to accomplish anything of value because they lack a simple and definite goal for their effort. Such would be glad to know just what is the best and most indispensable in culture, just what every one should both know and know about. Hence such lists as Mr. Lubbock's 100 best books have a suggestiveness and stimulus for those ambitious of higher cultivation. With reference to such lists it is, indeed, often objected that standards vary, that where tastes differ it is useless to be so specific. Granting, however, that some allowance ought always to be made for individuality and variance in

critical standards, yet there is a general consensus of criticism which even the most original mind cannot wholly neglect, and which is a safe rule for the great majority. Let us then try to form a list of the one hundred best productions of literature, science, art and music, which ought to be considered in any scheme of education or of self-culture. The following culture list for books of all kinds, works of art and musical compositions, may be suggestive:—

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| 1 Webster, International Dictionary. | 20 Swift, Gulliver's Travels. |
| 2 Bartholomew, Library Atlas. | 21 Defoe, Robinson Crusoe. |
| 3 Chambers' Encyclopædia, new edition. | 22 Eliot, Adam Bede. |
| 4 Bartlett, Familiar Quotations. | 23 Dickens, Pickwick Papers. |
| 5 Shakespere. | 24 Scott, Ivanhoe. |
| 6 Milton. | 25 Thackeray, Vanity Fair. |
| 7 Tennyson. | 26 Hawthorne, Marble Faun. |
| 8 R. Browning, Selections. | 27 Poe's Tales. |
| 9 Longfellow, Poems. | 28 Bible. |
| 10 Lowell, Poems. | 29 Bunyan, Pilgrim's Progress. |
| 11 American Poems, Scudder. | 30 Kempis, Imitation of Christ. |
| 12 Golden Treasury, Palgrave. | 31 Marcus Aurelius. |
| 13 Bacon, Essays. | 32 Homer, Pope. |
| 14 Carlyle, Sartor Resartus. | 33 Church, Trial and Death of Socrates (Plato). |
| 15 Irving, Sketch-Book. | 34 Dante, Longfellow. |
| 16 Holmes, Autocrat of the Breakfast Table. | 35 Goethe, Taylor. |
| 17 Emerson, Essays. | 36 Molière, Select Comedies. |
| 18 American Prose, Scudder. | 37 Hugo, Les Misérables. |
| 19 English Prose, Garnett. | 38 Cervantes, Don Quixote. |
| | 39 Bryce, American Commonwealth. |

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| 40 McMaster, History of the United States. | 69 Claude, David at the Cave of Adullam. |
| 41 Green, Shorter History of England. | 70 Millet, Angelus. |
| 42 Picturesque America, Appleton. | 71 Murillo, Child and St. John. |
| 43 Mahaffy, Pictures of Greece. | 72 Velasquez, Philip IV., Uffizi. |
| 44 Wey, Rome. | 73 Reynolds, Dorothy. |
| 45 Lübke, History of Art. | 74 Hogarth, Marriage à la Mode. |
| 46 Cooke, New Chemistry. | 75 Turner, Slave Ship. |
| 47 Langley, New Astronomy. | 76 Pergolesi, Stabat Mater. |
| 48 Shaler, Story of the Earth. | 77 Bach, Passion Music. |
| 49 James, Shorter Psychology. | 78 Bach, Organ Fugue, G Minor. |
| 50 Wallace, Darwinism. | 79 Handel, Messiah. |
| 51 Hermes of Olympus. | 80 Handel, Israel in Egypt. |
| 52 Venus of Melos. | 81 Gluck, Orpheus. |
| 53 Niobe. | 82 Haydn, Creation. |
| 54 Michael Angelo, Moses. | 83 Mozart, Don Giovanni. |
| 55 Michael Angelo, Day and Night. | 84 Mozart, Requiem Mass. |
| 56 Donatello, St. George. | 85 Beethoven, Choral Symphony. |
| 57 Luca della Robbia, Singing Children. | 86 Beethoven, Fifth Symphony. |
| 58 Raphael, St. Cecilia. | 87 Schubert, Erl König. |
| 59 Raphael, Madonna della Sedia. | 88 Weber, Freischütz. |
| 60 Leonardo, Last Supper. | 89 Weber, Invitation to Waltz. |
| 61 Leonardo, Mona Lisa. | 90 Mendelssohn, Elijah. |
| 62 Correggio, St. Catherine. | 91 Mendelssohn, Spring Song. |
| 63 Titian, Christ and Tribute Money. | 92 Schumann, Symphony in D Flat. |
| 64 Dürer, Knight and Death. | 93 Schumann, Phantasie Stücke. |
| 65 Rembrandt, Night Watch. | 94 Chopin, Fantasia Impromptu. |
| 66 Ruben's Garland of Flowers. | 95 Chopin, Polonaise in A Flat. |
| 67 Van Dyck, Children of Charles I. | 96 Liszt, Hungarian Rhapsody (2). |
| 68 Poussin, Arcadia. | 97 Berlioz, Damnation of Faust. |
| | 98 Meyerbeer, Huguenots. |
| | 99 Wagner, Lohengrin. |
| | 100 Wagner, Der Ring des Nibelungen. |

A subsidiary method which may sometimes be of value in sharpening the critical sense with advanced students is to require from them actual literary work. However, appreciativeness is by no means vitally connected with executive ability. Indeed, the literary critic and the *littérateur* are often quite distinct. To enjoy good writing I no more need to be a writer than to be a musician to enjoy good music, or a preacher to enjoy good preaching. The greatest fallacy in the education of to-day is the so-called laboratory method, so far as it supposes that we need to become scientists in order to appreciate science, and artists in order to appreciate art.

Further, the usual order in the study of art in our schools is the time order from past to present. Where development is traced it is, perhaps invariably, from earlier writers to later. But this order certainly contravenes, and that very directly, a most important psychic and pedagogic law; namely, that mind tends ever to pass from known to unknown, from present to past, rather than *vice versâ*. In any exploration of literature it is most easy and profitable for the student to begin with the works of the day, as embodying thoughts and feelings familiar to him, and go out and upward from thence to the remote sources.

If you live at the mouth of a stream, the natural method of tracing its course is to ascend it.

Further, I would insist that the main divisions of literary study should be not personal or periodic, but topical, because the largest and simplest interest runs in this form. For the college course, literature may be divided into fiction, drama, essays, and poetry. The best introduction to literary study is undoubtedly by way of fiction; and the Freshman, beginning with current novels, should trace backward to the earliest prose romances. In the same way let the Sophomore take up the drama; the junior, essays; the senior, poetry. The student in four years might thus come to some large understanding of and real intimacy with the distinct qualities of the distinct forms of literary expression.

And I would lay the greatest stress on what is now almost neglected—the study of current literature. But too often the graduate is led by his collegiate training to look slightly on the art of his own times, in favour of the supposed classics, and even to sneer at the present under cover of the past. This is fatal to all productivity and usefulness in the present. Literature is at once the expression of life and the introduction thereto, and hence the art of

every age has its main function for its own time. The main interest of the student naturally and rightly lies in the present; to get into true touch with his times, and so find his true place therein, is his most earnest endeavour, and so for him the study of the life of other ages should be wholly secondary and subsidiary. Current history has recently become a study in some schools, and I would enter this plea for current literature.

I conclude that a genuine revival of high art in our democratic civilization is impossible until the general taste be elevated, and this elevation must be largely attained through the improvement in scope and method of artistic education. Goethe truly says, "Happy is the man who early in life knows what art is"; and this insight into the real nature of art can only be reached and sustained by a constant familiarity with the best art during the whole period of education.

VII.

Literary Art and Life

LITERARY art shows in its history several stages in relation to the general life of man. At first it springs directly from this life, and is, like the flower to the plant, an immediate expression and part of the life of the whole. Thus the earliest literature is the naïve lyric, the lover passionately appealing to his mistress, and endeavouring to excite her love. The object of his song, be it noticed, is not to rouse in her admiration for his art; his art is not to stir her æsthetic, but her amorous nature. That is, at the first, art is not for art's sake, but for life's sake; the love-song incites to love, the war-song to war, and, indeed, every emotion simply uses words as a means of communicating itself to others. So this literary art, though often highly beautiful, is really hortatory and practical. Sometimes, indeed, there is monologue, as in the lament of David over Jonathan,

but it is still a spontaneous outburst and far removed from pure art.

But while art in its earliest, crudest form is quite artless, a mere spontaneous, immediate outburst of feeling, there certainly soon enters some sense of form, and the strain becomes premeditated, though it yet continue as an expression of some real, common experience of life. And the deeper and stronger the experience, the greater the artistic expression; the more powerful the love or grief, the nobler the song. Art, while losing none of its absolute sincerity and *naïveté*, gains in grace and refinement. Here literature attains to please and interest in a somewhat objective way. What a charm, for instance, in Vasari!—the good, the gentle, the gracious Vasari, as he so ingenuously yet so artistically tells the story of himself and brother artists! Vasari thus characteristically concludes his history of art, and in particular the account of his own life as artist: “And now it shall suffice me to have spoken thus much of myself, who have thus arrived, amidst many labours, to the age of fifty-five; but I am prepared to live so long as it shall please God, to His honour and for the service of my friends; and, so far as in me lies, will be ever ready to promote and work for the progress of these

most noble arts." Italian autobiographers, as Cellini, Goldoni, Vasari, give us the true prose lyric. Free from the prim, critical self-consciousness of our time, they reveal themselves to us with the charming frankness of children.

And we may say that the best art, being the deepest experience in fullest expression, is always autobiographic. Thus the finest of Ciceronian prose in the English language is doubtless the famous passage in the preface to Dr. Johnson's Dictionary, where, speaking of the conclusion of his herculean task, he says: "In this work, when it shall be found that much is omitted, let it not be forgotten that much likewise is performed; and though no book was never spared out of tenderness to the author, and the world is little solicitous to know whence proceeded the faults of that which it condemns, yet it may gratify curiosity to inform it that the English Dictionary was written with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academie bowers, but amid inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and sorrow." Again, perhaps the finest description in all Balzac is the passage in *Père Goriot*, which sets forth with wonderful vividness Madame Vanquer's boarding-

house and its inmates, and which is taken from his own vivid first impressions of Parisian life. Balzac, when he gets away from what he has seen and felt to what he merely imagines—as the life of the aristocracy—becomes comparatively weak. And even with that inferior race, the merely portrait *littérateurs*, whose interests and life are pre-eminently objective, it is those characters which come under their close and long scrutiny, and which they are best fitted to reveal themselves, that are enshrined in their best art. Thus the stiletto keenness of Saint-Simon appears in his best work, and even Boswell's *Johnson* would lose half its value but for the Boswellian gusto. Hence in every way the artist who is engrossed in himself or in others must get his best material out of himself. It is always the life within which flowers into real art, all mere outward stimulus results only in the tissue paper flowers of flimsy artifice.

But while real, honest experience buds and blossoms into genuine art which is more or less self-conscious, there at length comes another stage, and one of decadence, that of dilettantism, where art and its forms become a plaything for the *ennuyé*. The *dilettante* seizes upon art, not to express experience, but as a pastime for an empty life, as a mode of the novel,

as a mere diversion and amusement. This *dilettante*, having no real life in himself, becomes a parasite, and in seeking experience merely for experience's sake, he finds that among the many forms of experience art is as pleasant a way of killing time as any, and he straightway becomes amateur poet or painter. After amusing himself with bizarre effects and *tours de force* of technique for a time he drops art for some new toy.

We have described art as in the first form arising directly from naïve experience, like the flower from the stem of the plant. In this stage of art the artist does not need to seek his subject, but the subject is in him, overmastering him and carrying him to an inevitable expression. But as the artist gradually masters subject and method, he becomes mere spectator. All experience is then studied and cultivated for art's sake, and life becomes of worth only as material for art. Thus in Goethe the artist is greater than the man, as contrasted with Dante, in whom the man surpassed the artist, and with Shakespere, in whom there is perfect poise. Goethe cultivated life for art's sake. Thus he sought love affairs merely to turn them to artistic account, and was throughout conscious of himself and his art. This complete consciousness of himself and his ends at all times is the most notable characteristic

of Goethe. We do not deny that he loved, but yet this constant appreciation of the artistic value of his love episodes was after all the main motive. Thus Goethe's love poems are not, as would be natural in the first stage of poetry, to further his love affairs, but his love affairs to further his poetry. If this be not true of all these episodes, yet many of his later ones appear to be sought largely for the purposes of art, and at least he remains throughout perfectly conscious of their availability as artistic material. Thus art acquires ascendancy over life. Art is thus made the supreme satisfaction which alone makes life worth living, and so we make all life tributary to it. So art to Flaubert was "the one thing in life that is good and real." "The only way not to be unhappy is to shut yourself up in art, and count everything else as nothing." But an art which so profoundly contemns the whole range of life is as *bourgeois* as the *bourgeoisie* it despises and which despises it. Art is not a mode of experience merely self-sufficing; it cannot stand wholly apart from its subject, and yet adequately realize it. Art is only a single independent organ in the body of culture, and if it isolate itself, it destroys itself. The fecund age for great art is not that of mere stylistic endeavour, however discriminating, but that of crisis in the world-

life. Eras, when life has been merely and wholly literary—as Italy at the end of the last century—have been unfruitful of really good literature.

But, finally, we have to add a fourth form of the relation of art to life. Not only does it consciously monopolize all life and make the whole of life its minister, but contrariwise it may be consciously and reflectively a minister to life. Of this form Wordsworth's poetry is an eminent example. For him life has not its sole value as being a subject for æsthetic interpretation, but, on the contrary, he considered it the destiny of his poetry, as he remarks to Lady Beaumont, "to console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and to feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous." He thus makes not life the servant of art, but art of life. But this ministry is not, as in the earliest form, as direct expression and incitement. Wordsworth, indeed, defines poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity disappears, and an emotion kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation is gradually

produced, and itself actually exists in the mind." Poetic art is thus life rejuvenated in memory and contemplation, and appealing to man not only by its sensuous but by its intellectual and moral beauty, it so becomes minister to the whole higher life of man.

I think that art in all its forms as related to life has produced real and good work. And I need not except even the amateurish sort, for in much *vers de société*, for instance, we find real art. But yet in every stage we see that best art is from the deepest experience, is the outcome of the most absorbing passion of the greatest personalities. Even where art is wholly for art's sake, where dramatic objectivity is carried to its greatest length, art to be of high order can only emanate from a powerful mind, whose whole life lies in this very objective movement. Thus man, then, in his character and moods, is ever the basis of all art—graphic, glyptic, musical, or literary.

VIII.

Travels and Literature

WE set it down as an evident, though striking and curious fact, that no great literary work has ever been achieved in the division of books called Travels. Great travellers have not been gifted with great literary skill, and *per contra* the great *littérateurs* have stayed at home, or not wandered far, or at least made but little of their experiences. The great explorers who have added much to our geographical knowledge, the redoubtable adventurers who have penetrated savage tribes and striven with mighty beasts, the men of science and religion who have gone afar, all have left abundant records behind them; but we do not find one piece of permanent literature of high rank, though we would not relegate all Travels, as does Flaubert, to the category of the newspaper paragraph.

The main reason for the fact that Travels are poor literary material is that they do not by their very

nature partake deeply of life, and so their literary expression is comparatively slight. Travel is but a mode of impressionism. And this is true whether we travel merely out of the lower instinct, the migratory and nomadic, or to appease curiosity, or even to attain knowledge. The traveller is attracted by externals; as the hunter distinguishes birds by their feathers, so the traveller men by their skins. The salient feature for him is how strange men are clothed or unclothed, sheltered and fed: he cannot stop to learn their language and to understand their thoughts and feelings. But if he does stop he is no longer a traveller, but a resident. Thus the essence of travel is a flitting impressionism. And the impression being in general merely recollected is much weakened. Some of the best travel-writers, indeed, as Mrs. Bishop, set down their impressions on the spot, or in the evening of each day, and thus reach a certain freshness and vividness. But this method of work is often very unsatisfactory by reason of weariness, lack of facility, and various distractions. Though then we would not, as Flaubert does, rank all Travels with the "newspaper paragraph," yet we must place a large part there.

From a literary point of view the best parts of travel-writings are those which describe wonderful natural

phenomena, or which reflect in a very powerful way the writer's achievements, as in meeting wild beasts or in scaling mountains, for herein lies the deepest experience. It is written in an ancient Hebrew book that on the day of his creation man was bid by his Creator to "replenish the earth and subdue it." This task has now for many ages occupied man's attention, but only of late has he attained any great mastery of nature and any true cosmopolitanism. To-day, for the first time, he feels fairly at home on the earth. He sails over every water, he sets foot on every land with confidence. He subdues even the pinnales of the earth, making of the highest Alps a summer playing ground, scaling Mont Blanc and even the dread Matterhorn with the same zest with which a school-boy climbs an apple-tree. Travels, as the expression of this earth-conquering spirit, will certainly exhilarate, and may have much literary charm, as we see in Henry M. Stanley's story of his march through the great forest of Darkest Africa. Again, an artist, A. D. McCormick, toiling up the slopes of the stupendous Himalayas, has a sudden vision of beauty which overwhelms him.

"We were in the bottom of a narrow valley, in which great grey rock cliffs rose high up on either hand, and disappeared in

the mist at the end of the gorge, across which the clouds trailed, ... and away in the heavens above I saw three great ice peaks, like towers of polished silver, which the passing cloud shadows dimmed and brightened, as when one breathes on bright metal. The colours that played in the depths of this blaze of light can never be imagined or described. I gazed spellbound. . . . I had eyes for no other scenery that day, for I had seen heaven and the great white throne."

However, such a passage is exceptional in the literature of travels. The chief literary value of such descriptions obviously lies not in the material facts, but in the imaginative intensity which is stimulated. But the test of good Travels is adherence to actuality; the travel-writer cannot be too realistic. Yet though from one point of view imagination vitiates Travels, from the literary standpoint it gives them their true life. Thus the abiding charm of the old travellers, like Maundeville, lies in their naïve deviations from realism. Again, mere extent of travels leads often to realism, and thus it may result that the smaller the scope the better the literature, for there is always room for sentiment and imagination. Thus Robert Louis Stevenson, travelling a few miles with a donkey, writes better literature thereon than on thousands of miles of travel through the Pacific Ocean. So De Maistre's *Voyage autour ma Chambre* is better litera-

ture than Cook's *Three Voyages Round the World*. Wholly imaginary Travels like Robinson Crusoe's and Gulliver's are classics. If it be said that Darwin's *Voyage in the Beagle* is an instance of a literary classic which is pure travel-writing, we must answer that so far as this is so it proceeds from a scientific imagination of the highest order setting its stamp upon the narrative.

Yet it is undeniably true that the travel-interest enters into literature, even the very best, as in the *Odyssey*, *Faerie Queene*, *Don Quixote*, *Canterbury Tales*, but it is an interest of fiction rather than fact. And, after all, the main interest in these masterpieces is characterization, and we may say this even of Herodotus. Historians, indeed, like travellers, can attain only a low literary standing, for history is only a travel into the past, and in holding fast to reality it is unable to attain the free, ideal beauty of literary art. Both History and Travels belong under science rather than fine art, and so far as a book of general history or of particular history—that is biography—is artistic, we may be sure it is in so far false, and thus poor history. The stylist enables us to see events, people, and places not in all their fulness of bare actuality, but in some

aspect only, and through the distorting glass of the personal equation.

The greatest literary artists have sometimes travelled, but, as we have already intimated, have not been able to make much direct use of their experiences. Goethe's *Letters from Italy* have but a slight value in his total work. And so also Goethe as a *dilettante*, a traveller mentally into orientalism, classicism, romanticism, achieves only secondary work, such as the *West-Eastern Divan*, the *Iphigenian Tauris*, or *Götz von Berlichingen*. Goethe travels the least from his real and deepest self in the *Faust*, which is modernism under the thinnest disguise of mediæval legend. In American literature Holmes, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Thoreau, and Emerson have left us Travels, but they are the most inferior of their works.

And if we rise from the individual to the nation we see that the home-loving, home-abiding peoples have produced the greatest literatures. Greek literature did not wander abroad for its inspiration, but was entirely indigenous and self-centered, and so entirely characteristic. The Romans, becoming travelled, can evolve only a secondary literature. And among modern literatures it is those productions that savour most of the soil that stand pre-eminent; the most

English, the most Italian, the most French of the artists are the masters. The chief reason why the great periods of English literature are for ever past is that the Englishman is fast losing his insularity, is becoming a travelled cosmopolite. France, in holding persistently to her Gallicism and Parisianism, attains to-day a higher, more characteristic literature than the English.

In all cases travel dissipates the real self; the tree, too often transplanted, falls into decadence. However great may be the advantages of travel to some forms of culture, it undoubtedly weakens, if not destroys, individualism and nationalism in art. And the time of national literatures is certainly passing, but that of the complete unity of man and the cosmopolitan literature is yet to come. But cosmopolitanism, when it achieves the largest life the world has ever seen, will blossom into the greatest of literatures, and travels will be no more.

IX.

Saint-Simon and His Method

SAINT-SIMON is, perhaps, a unique instance of a man to whom literary art and the sense of style are practically unknown, who yet attains a very eminent place in literature, and, indeed, the first place in his own line. In speaking of the death of Racine, he plainly excludes himself from the ranks of men of letters, for whom in general he had no high regard. He even mentions Voltaire as merely "a manner of personage in the republic of letters," who "even achieved a sort of importance among a certain people."

But by an irony of fate Saint-Simon, who had little esteem for *littérateurs*, is himself a *littérateur* and that of the first rank. For vividness and power his portraits are unsurpassed even by the greatest novelists and dramatists. Nowhere outside of Balzac, and not often there, do we find such a close portrait as this of the

Princess d'Harcourt; for example (St. John's translation): "She was a tall, fat creature, mightily brisk in her movements, with a complexion like milk porridge; great, ugly, thick lips, and hair like tow, always sticking out and hanging down in disorder, like all the rest of her fittings out; dirty, slatternly, always intriguing, pretending, enterprising, quarrelling—always low as the grass or high as the rainbow, according to the person with whom she had to deal; she was a blonde fury, nay more, a harpy; she had all the effrontery of one, and the deceit and violence, all the avarice and the audacity." And what a masterful incisiveness is this picture of Dubois, which we must quote in full: "The Abbé Dubois was a little, pitiful, wizened, herring-gutted man, in a flaxen wig, with a weasel's face, brightened by some intellect. In familiar terms, he was a regular scamp. All the vices unceasingly fought within him for supremacy, so that a continual uproar filled his mind. Avarice, debauchery, ambition, were his gods; perfidy, flattery, foot-licking, his means of action; complete impiety was his repose; and he held the opinion as a great principle, that probity and honesty are chimeras, with which people deck themselves, but which have no existence. He excelled in low intrigues; he lived in them, and could not do

without them; but they always had an aim, and he followed them with a patience terminated only by success, or by firm conviction that he could not reach what he aimed at, or unless, as he wandered in deep darkness, a glimmer of light came to him from some other cranny. He passed thus his days in sapping and counter-sapping. The most impudent deceit had become natural to him, and was concealed under an air that was simple, upright, sincere, often bashful. He would have spoken with grace and forcibly if, fearful of saying more than he wished, he had not accustomed himself to a fictitious hesitation, a stuttering, which disfigured his speech, and which, redoubled when important things were in question, became insupportable and sometimes unintelligible. He had wit, learning, knowledge of the world, much desire to please and insinuate himself; but all was spoiled by an odour of falsehood which escaped in spite of him through every pore of his body—even in the midst of his gaiety, which made whoever beheld it sad. Wicked besides, with reflection, both by nature and by argument, treacherous and ungrateful, expert in the blackest villainies, terribly brazen when detected; he desired everything, envied everything, and wished to seize everything. It was known afterwards, when he no longer could restrain

himself, to what an extent he was selfish, debauched, inconsistent, ignorant of everything, passionate, headstrong, blasphemous and mad, and to what an extent he publicly despised his master, the State, and all the world, never hesitating to sacrifice everybody and everything to his credit, his power, his absolute authority, his greatness, his avarice, his fears, and his vengeance." What concentrated characterization! What incisiveness! What torrential vehemence! With how few and masterful strokes these portraits are etched! And we observe the same force and graphic intensity in the larger and full-length portraits of Lausun, Monseigneur, Louis XIV., Madame de Maintenon, and especially of the Duc d'Orléans. This last characterization seems to me, on the whole, the masterpiece in Saint-Simon's gallery, for here we have a large and complex character studied from the life for many years in the closest intimacy and with preternatural acuteness.

If now we ask why Saint-Simon became such a close student of men, I think that while like all courtiers he studied life in order to help his own affairs, yet the dominant motive was a deep-seated love of character-study for its own sake. When fifteen years old he is so curious to see the expression on the king's face

after the announcement of the sudden death of his minister, Louvois, that he waited for the king and "followed him during all of his promenade." And throughout Saint-Simon's long life an insatiable curiosity for the characteristic, as displayed in the Court of Louis XIV., is his master passion. If he mentions an incident or tells a story it is, as he often says, only to "characterize" or to "paint the man." We cannot say that it is mere vulgar curiosity that actuated Saint-Simon, nor yet is it a psychological interest; but he studies character for its own sake, and feels the impulse of the novelist and dramatist toward the typical. With what transports of delight he gloats over the appearance of the courtiers when the news of the sudden death of the Dauphin is announced! and he gives us a scene which for sheer dramatic intensity and power can scarcely be matched in all literature.

But added to Saint-Simon's love for the spectacle of Court-life, as diverting and interesting in itself, was a desire to record the true character of the men about him, and so vindicate himself in the eyes of posterity. He seeks to show to the life what manner of men were these courtiers, many of whom he thought wrongfully held precedence over him. Yet though there is some-

times a tinge of bitterness in his descriptions, we feel their fundamental veracity. Nor does his characterization ever become caricature. Whatever may have been his personal relations with his fellow-courtiers, he yet succeeds in drawing them clearly and well on every side without bias and without exaggeration. Take such a forcible characterization as that of M. le Prince: "Unnatural son, cruel father, terrible husband, detestable master, pernicious neighbour," and we feel from all we know that the words are not misapplied. And his historic impartiality applies even when he speaks of himself, for he records with perfect calmness the king's observation, "that since I had quitted the army I did nothing but meddle in matters of rank and bring actions against everybody." So also he characterizes M. de Luxemburg and others of his enemies with perfect fairness.

Saint-Beuve has compared Saint-Simon to Tacitus; but aside from a vivid intensity which is common to both they have little in common. Most certainly Saint-Simon does not partake of Tacitus' most striking characteristic, the profound gloom of deepest despair which envelops the Roman like a pall. The attitude of Saint-Simon is that of disgust rather than despair. He has not the severe elevation and humanitarian

scope of Tacitus, who dwells in a region of the moral sublime which the French courtier never approaches.

Again, with Tacitus all is tragedy, but with Saint-Simon comedy is very prominent, especially the comedy of manners. He excels as anecdotist, and inevitably communicates his rare gusto to the reader. The anecdote of the eccentric M. le Prince imagining himself to be dead and so putting his physician, Finot, into great embarrassment, is a good example. "What embarrassed Finot most, as he related to us more than once, was that M. le Prince would eat nothing, for the simple reason, as he alleged, that he was dead, and that dead men did not eat! It was necessary, however, that he should take something, or he would really have died. Finot, and another doctor who attended him, determined to agree with him that he was dead, but to maintain that dead men sometimes eat. They offered to produce dead men of this kind; and, in point of fact, led to M. le Prince some persons unknown to him, who pretended to be dead, but ate nevertheless. This trick succeeded, but he would never eat except with these men and Finot. On that condition he ate well, and this jealousy lasted a long time, and drove Finot to despair by its duration; who, nevertheless, sometimes nearly died of laughter in relating to us what passed at

these repasts, and in the conversation from the other world heard there."

The men of Saint-Simon's time laughed freely and frankly, *à gorge déployée*, and he joined in the laughter, and tells many a good story with infinite zest. Yet Saint-Simon is ever spectator, and enjoys the laughter of others as suggestive of the characteristic. For instance, in the capital anecdote of the Duc d'Orléans about Louis XIV. and Fontpertius, we plainly perceive that Saint-Simon enjoys the Duc's laughter as much as the story.

Saint-Simon, in his *Memoirs*, is primarily not historian nor biographer nor even autobiographer, but anecdotist and characterizer. In some respects he might be compared to Boswell, but he has a vastly wider appreciativeness and a vastly deeper insight. He is greedy of the characteristic and revels in it; and the intensity of this delight leads perforce to an expression which is literature of a high order. He is an unconscious *littérateur*, a stylist, who knows not style, but inevitably attains it by the sheer force of the emotions which lead to and from his study of men. His work might have been better had he studied literary form, had he been consciously an artist; but, nevertheless, the results point clearly to this, that not form but matter is the

vitalizing power in literature. Saint-Simon's keen spirit, wrought to highest emotional intensity, reaches at its best an individual style of unequalled graphic force.

It is a pity that Saint-Simon is not better known to English readers. Mr. St. John's translation and abridgment in three volumes, though well done, is apt to discourage by its length and lack of continuity. If the best passages could be thrown into a connected form, say with chapters on Louis XIV., Duc d'Orléans, etc., in a small volume, it would serve to introduce Saint-Simon to many new appreciators. They would, I think, find his wonderful *Memoirs* the most fascinating book in all literature by reason of its piquancy of detail on human character. With noon-day clearness we see what manner of men these courtiers were; we are personally introduced to each, and form a vital acquaintance. They are often, indeed, barbarians and Philistines with the thinnest ventering of culture, which easily peels off; but we see everywhere powerful and typical individualities frankly revealed, and often of a Shakesperean grandeur.

X.

Thoreau as a Prose Writer

THOREAU'S prose writings, as published in complete form in eleven volumes, make it for the first time possible to come to any clear and full judgment concerning his character and place as a writer of artistic prose. What is Thoreau's best work? What is his rank among artists? If his life had been prolonged, would he have done better work than he actually accomplished? To these and the like interesting questions it is now possible to give some definite answer. Let us begin with the first, and consider what is Thoreau's best and most characteristic expression of himself.

Walden is usually pointed out as Thoreau's masterpiece. But while this is certainly a very brilliant piece of writing, and has a unity too often lacking in his other works, it yet affords but a slight clue to the real Thoreau; for here he addresses an

inquiring public desirous of knowing in detail his hut-life by Walden pond, and in the whole course of the book he keeps this audience in mind, goes out to meet it, and by a most conspicuously popular style adapts himself to it. In lightsome mood, and with many a satirical stroke and humorous touch, he tells this Walden story. What can be finer, as a playful image, than his complaint that the "Iron Horse," "whose ear-rending neigh is heard throughout the town, had muddied the Boiling Spring with his foot, and he it is that has browsed off all the woods on Walden shore." But with all its excellence of style *Walden* is comparatively superficial in both matter and manner. If we would find Thoreau's deeper self, we must search elsewhere.

Let us look then to the Journals, as printed in the four volumes entitled *Spring, Summer, Autumn,* and *Winter*. Here Thoreau writes merely for himself and to please himself, and so reveals his true self. The "journalizing," he says, is "an effort to expose my innermost and richest wares to light." The Journals are then, I take it, most important documents to help us in fully understanding and appreciating the real Thoreau and his art. Here we find, indeed, much treasure, both silver and gold;

but also some base metal, both brass and pewter. As a specimen of his basest metal, we extract a few lines from his profuse and foolish musings on a big toad-stool:—

“Such growths ally our age to those earlier periods which geology reveals. I wondered if it had not some relation to the skunk, though not in odour, yet in its colour and the general impression it made. It suggests a vegetative force which may almost make man tremble for his dominion. It carries me back to the era of the formation of the coal measures, the age of the Saurus and the Pliosaurus, and when bullfrogs were as big as bulls. . . . Is it not a giant mildew or mold? In the warm, muggy night the surface of the earth is mildewed. The mold is the flower of humid darkness and ignorance. The pyramids and other monuments of Egypt are a vast mildew or toad-stool which have met with no light of day sufficient to waste them away.”

This is mere sophomoric crudeness and callow maundering. It is geologic bosh as well, for these fungi are much later than “the age of the Saurus and the Pliosaurus.”

And such slipshod thought is not infrequent in the Journals, though often in a measure redeemed by accuracy and purity of style. We have met with but one bad error in style, and this is so ludicrously bad that it is worth quoting. Describing the winter-green blossom, Thoreau says, “It is a very pretty little

chandelier of a flower, fit to adorn the forest floor." Possibly Thoreau's slight acquaintance with ball-rooms made him overlook the fact that chandeliers do not usually adorn floors.

But it is very pleasant to the patient searcher among the Journals to find amid the baser metals nuggets of purest gold; here and there he comes upon passages of descriptive literature of the highest order. Take, for instance, the description of the felling and dismembering of a giant pine by the lumberman. We can quote only the conclusion of this woodland tragedy. The tree felled, the chopper

"has measured it with his axe and marked off the small logs it will make. It is lumber. . . . When the fish-hawk in the spring revisits the banks of the Musketaquid, he will circle in vain to find his accustomed perch, and the hen-hawk will mourn for the pines lofty enough to protect her brood. . . . I hear no knell tolled, I see no procession of mourners in the streets or the woodland aisles. The squirrel has leaped to another tree, the hawk has circled farther off, and has now settled upon a new eyrie, but the woodman is preparing to lay his axe at the root of that also."

This has genuine quality, as has also the following description of a bobolink's song:—

"I hear the note of a bobolink concealed in the top of an apple-tree behind me. Though this bird's full strain is ordinarily somewhat trivial, this one appears to be meditating a

strain as yet unheard in meadow or orchard. *Paulo majora canamus*. He is just touching the strings of his theorbo, his glassichord, his water organ, and one or two notes globe themselves and fall in liquid bubbles from his tuning throat. It is as if he touches his harp within a vase of liquid melody, and when he lifts it out the notes fall like bubbles from the trembling strings. Methinks they are the most liquidly sweet and melodious sounds I ever heard. They are as refreshing to my ear as the first distant tinkling and gurgling of a rill to a thirsty man. Oh, never advance farther in your art; never let us hear your full strain, sir! But away he launches, and the meadow is all bespattered with melody. . . . It is the foretaste of such strains as never fell on mortal ears, to hear which we should rush to our doors and contribute all that we possess and are."

Where will you find anything finer in its way than this? It is truly, like the bobolink's, a large and noble strain. And many of Thoreau's descriptions of notes of birds and animals have a very rare quality, as when he writes of the cock's clarion, the blackbird's song, and the bullfrog's trump.

To show once more what Thoreau in his best mood can do, look at this little landscape sketch:—

"The air is clear as if a cool, dewy brush had swept the meadows of all haze. A liquid coolness invests them, as if their midnight aspect were suddenly revealed to midday. The mountain outline is remarkably distinct, and the intermediate earth appears more than usually scooped out like a vast saucer sloping upwards to its sharp mountain rim. The mountains are washed in air."

This picture of pellucid air is remarkably artistic. Nought is florid or forced, but the expression is singularly close, clear, and grand. The phrase, "The mountains are washed in air," touches the sublime; it strikes the keynote of a nature hymn. For the moment Thoreau soars the empyrean with eagle sweep.

We confess to enjoying such slight but exquisite sketches as these from the Journals far more than the elaborate and conscious efforts in *Walden*. *Walden* is exoteric, the Journals are esoteric. *Walden* has not the deep seriousness, the solemn rapture, which pervades these records of daily life. Here we see more clearly than elsewhere how strongly Thoreau is thrilled and uplifted by nature's beauty. This "vision" affects him more "deeply and powerfully" than aught else. Hence he is a haunter of fields and rivers, of woods and hills; and, far withdrawing from the roar of modern mechanic life, he would "lurk," he says, "in crystalline thought, like the trout under verdurous banks, where stray mankind should only see my bubble coming to the surface."

But though Thoreau often rises to rapture in his marvellously sensitive response to nature, he yet never attains real poetic expression. He has the raw

material in plenty ; but, as Emerson says, " thyme and marjoram are not yet honey." Thoreau regards the art of metre, rhyme, and rhythm as too much akin to artifice. He thinks that the " very scheme and form " of poetry is adopted at " a sacrifice of vital truth and poetry," and he refuses to make this sacrifice.

Thoreau has been called the " poet-naturalist." We have seen that he is not a poet, and it is equally plain that he is not a naturalist. Throughout his Journals Thoreau iterates and reiterates that he is not a scientist, and that science has no vital interest for him. Indeed, the spirit of science is in the directest opposition to Thoreau's ; for while science does away with the personal equation, Thoreau magnifies it. He values nature not as a source of mere knowledge for its own sake, but as a fount of delight and inspiration which pours through his whole being. In all his close observation of nature, he seeks, not information, but beauty and sympathy. " In what book," he asks, " is this world and its beauty described ? Who has plotted the steps toward the discovery of beauty ? You must be in a different state from common. Your greatest success will be simply to conceive that such things are, and you will have no communication to make to the Royal Society." Thoreau thus shows an artist's dislike

of cold, unimpressionable science. He desires above all things to feel deeply the supernal beauty of nature, and to give large expression of this emotion in living prose; in short, Thoreau is pre-eminently an artist, and in particular an impressionist of the open-air school. Out-of-doors is the subject of his art; there is his studio—and, indeed, also his home, his theatre, his university, and his church.

But Thoreau is not equally open to all sides of nature. He lived for some time by the sea, and often visited its shore; yet, so far as we may judge from his writings, he was not much affected by the wondrous beauty and majesty of old ocean. He wandered over Cape Cod; he made excursions to the White Mountains, to the Maine woods, and to Canada; but his writings thereabout—and Thoreau is very faithful to himself in all his writings—are quite juiceless and uninspired. But let Thoreau once set foot on the well-beloved fields of Concord, walk in its forests, glide along its smooth-flowing river, and he at once utters a fresh, deep, and strong note. Even Monadnock and Wachusett thrill him chiefly as seen from Concord. All that is best in Thoreau's life and art centres in rural Concord; he is its literary *genius loci*; he broods over its every phase, and voices his observation and meditation in sentences

full of rarest insight and clearest beauty. Away from Concord he is ill at ease, and only partially receptive of the divine message of nature. "I am afraid," he says, "to travel much, or to famous places, lest it might completely dissipate the mind. Then I am sure that what we observe at home, if we observe anything, is of more importance than what we observe abroad. The far-fetched is of the least value."

Thoreau's writings show several styles. We distinguish five. First is the adolescent, diffuse, romantic style of *The Week*. This work we find intensely wearisome in its smooth discursiveness and sophomoric sententiousness. Second, there is the dry, matter-of-fact style of the *Cape Cod*, *Maine Woods*, and *Yankce in Canada* narratives. Here he is objective and reportorial. Thoreau himself speaks of the "Canada story" as simply a "report" of what he saw, and as "not worth the time I took to tell it." This is, perhaps, too harsh a judgment; but still all his stories of travel, though touched with a lucid simplicity, are yet on the whole quite meagre and commonplace. Again, we have the style of *Walden*, brilliant, sketchy, charming, but never satisfying, because it both reveals and conceals. And again, we have the frank, plain, but often noble style of the best

parts of the Journals and Letters. This writing is very concise and clear, often limpid, and generally slow of movement. However, the pine-tree episode, from which we have quoted, has much the swing of *Walden*; and in the Journals we find also the adolescent style, and even the dry narrative style, as in the account of the White Mountain trip. Lastly, we have the perfectly sound, sensible, sober style of the essay on "Wild Apples." This is a very delightful bit of prose, and, I think, quite the best complete work that Thoreau has left us. It shows that he could in his latter days give a unity of development and a mature expression, mellowed, withal, by a thoroughly genial humour—a humour wholly free from that satiric acidity which gives a bad taste to so much of Thoreau's production. The catalogue of the kinds of wild apples reminds one of Charles Lamb.

With whom shall we compare Thoreau as a painter of nature? Not with White of Selborne, for White is primarily a scientist, while Thoreau is above all and before all an artist. Not with Ruskin, for though both are artists, they are very diverse; Ruskin sees nature through the medium of the Bible and Turner, but Thoreau could allow neither priest nor painter to be his interpreter, and so he felt himself radically out

of tune with the great art critic. And further, the rich and cloying style of Ruskin is altogether unlike the crystalline simplicity of Thoreau's best work. Again, Thoreau has been likened to Richard Jefferies; but Jefferies is far more gentle and tender than Thoreau, is far more of a preacher, and has far more *finesse* in his art. Jefferies is also often sentimental and romantic, Thoreau never. Thus Thoreau could never have written this description of the finding of the first June rose:—

“But see—can it be? Stretch a hand high, quick, and reach it down; the first, the sweetest, the dearest rose of June. Not yet expected, for the time is between the may and the roses, least of all here in the hot and dusty highway; but it is found—the first rose of June.”

On the whole, the difference between Thoreau and Jefferies is quite as marked as the likeness. In his mind and art Thoreau is much nearer to Wordsworth than to either White or Ruskin, or Jefferies. Both Wordsworth and Thoreau are entirely individual and direct in their approach to nature, seeking at all times an unprepossessed impression, which they would express in the simplest and freest art—Wordsworth, in prosaic poetry; Thoreau, in poetic prose. For both, nature is a source not merely of æsthetic, but also of

ethical inspiration, though Wordsworth has a mature strength and poise, an abiding rock-like solidity, quite foreign to Thoreau. Both are local in their sentiment, the Lake country being to Wordsworth what Concord was to Thoreau.

For a particular comparison of work read the description of the bobolink's song, before mentioned, and then read these lines of Wordsworth on a nightingale's song:—

“O Nightingale ! thou surely art
A creature of a fiery heart ;—
These notes of thine—they pierce and pierce ;
Tumultuous harmony and fierce !
Thou sing'st as if the God of wine
Had helped thee to a Valentine ;
A song in mockery and despite
Of shades, and dews, and silent Night ;
And steady bliss, and all the loves
Now sleeping in these peaceful Groves.”

The art of Wordsworth is here more perfect and eloquent than Thoreau's, but Thoreau excels in intimacy with nature, and in fulness and closeness of expression. Thoreau is the more intense and thorough student of nature, and if he could have put his impression of the bobolink's song into adequate poetic form it would have been a nobler piece than Words-

worth's lines to a nightingale. Thoreau's matter is superior, but his manner is inferior.

What, then, is Thoreau's rank as literary artist? And has he, indeed, any permanent place in literature? We can with all safety predict that the greater part is perishable. It is plain enough that *The Week*, the stories of the Cape Cod, Maine, and Canada excursions, and most of the "Miscellanies," are perishable, third-rate work. *Walden* is certainly a brilliant piece of its kind, but that not the highest; and in the Journals we have a sketch-book containing some very beautiful studies, but no finished work. However, in my judgment the essay on "Wild Apples" shows Thoreau at his best, and in his true function; but even this needs pruning, and the theme is rather small and narrow. What an essay Thoreau could have given us on Bird-song! It would have been a classic. If Thoreau had lived his allotted span he might have produced some wonderfully fine work on such lines; but as it is we can only lament the unfulfilled promise of an artist uniquely great in animal and landscape word-painting. Thoreau was undoubtedly one of those rarest visitors to our planet—a genius; and, what is more, a genius who, knowing well that it is infinitely higher and harder to be true to himself than to

another, yet never swerved to the right or left in following out his bent. As such, appreciation of him is bound to grow, and that despite the incompleteness and immaturity of his actual performance. We may say with confidence that Thoreau's place, though small, is secure and permanent; he occupies a distinct but minor niche in the eternal Pantheon of Art.

XI.

The Secret of Style

IT may sound like a nonsensical paradox, and yet we may seriously maintain that laziness is the motive power of all human progress. Man has always sought to supply his wants by the least labour. He desires to travel, and, being too lazy to walk, he compels some beast to carry him; and at length, feeling this to be very slow and tiresome, he harnesses steam, and lounges in a palace car while spinning along at fifty miles an hour. And what are the telephone, the telegraph, and all the manifold machinery of modern life but the results of sheer laziness! If man were not at bottom an animal who cunningly devises means to save himself trouble, civilization would never have been born.

But man is not only physically, but mentally lazy. As his aversion to muscular toil has led him to material invention, so his distaste for intellectual toil

has led him to intellectual inventions, to the discovery and perfection of language and style. Literary style is best defined as a machine which secures the rapid and complete communication of ideas with the minimum of effort. The origin and the progress of style is thus satisfactorily connected with the most salient and general characteristic of humanity, namely, the disinclination to exert oneself.

Herbert Spencer's famous essay, entitled *The Philosophy of Style*—by which is meant the Psychology of Style—propounds what we may term the economic theory of literary effect with much skill. The secret, he tells us, of the pleasing effect of diction, rhythm, figurative language, sentence structure, lies in this, that these are labour-saving devices to economize mental effort, that by their use we get with the least attention the greatest apprehension; and hence we receive pleasure as reflex of the facile and full cognition functioning. Literary pleasure is thus brought under the law of pleasure in general. Take the quotation from Shelley, cited by Mr. Spencer—

“Methought among the lawns together
We wandered, underneath the young grey dawn,
And multitudes of dense-white fleecy clouds
Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains,
Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind.”

You have read this with pleasure, and is not the source of this pleasure the ease and celerity with which the mind reaches the "desired conception"? Vividly and forcibly the mind is led by cunning use of phrase and rhythm and figure to realize the picture, and there is a glow of pleasure in the reaction from the facility. Language is a medium for the transfer of ideas, and when it accomplishes this office most effectively, as in the present case, and acts upon the mind so clearly and forcibly that *nolens volens* the reader at once apprehends and comprehends, he feels a thrill of pleasure therewith, just as there is pleasure connected with the rapid and easy assimilation of well-cooked food. Before developing and criticising this theory I may remark in passing that Blair, the rhetorician, in treating of the structure of sentences, foreshadows in a way the economic theory when he writes that "to have the relation of every word and member of a sentence marked in the most proper and distinct manner gives, not clearness only, but grace and beauty to a sentence, making the mind pass smoothly and agreeably along the parts of it." This surely implies that æsthetical pleasure of style may be based in a psychological economy and facility. It is, indeed, a commonplace remark, "The book is so

well written that you cannot mistake or miss its meaning"; wherein the identification of style with intelligibility becomes a truism. Certainly Mr. Spencer has not in the economic theory propounded anything radically new.

We note at the outset that while this pleasure of style may result from economy, it is not the pleasure of the conscious economizer. The reader who is enjoying a very readable book has a distinct pleasure from him who views with satisfaction his finishing a book at a great and unexpected saving of mental energy. We have here the direct pleasure from economical exercise of the faculties contrasted with the indirect introspective-retrospective pleasure at economy effected. Many persons take as much pleasure in making mental energy go as far as possible, but this pleasure in economy is obviously not the pleasure of style, which is not reflective, but naïve and direct impression.

Language, either spoken or written, by its more or less effective modes of accomplishing its office, does then awaken a simple and direct pleasure, according to the general law that pleasure accompanies efficient acts as a sanction and stimulus. It is obvious that style for spoken language, oratorical style, is precedent

in its formation to style for written language, or literary style, throughout its whole history. Yet the distinctness of the two modes is affirmed by the common observation that a speech, impressively pleasing to listen to, often does not read well. While it may be true that in its written origin literary style borrowed certain devices from oratorical, yet in its latest evolution the written page is far from being the speaking page. The book is not a substitute speaker addressing us, and modes of expression which are most fitting for conversation and oration, though sometimes used by writers, are alien to pure literary art. However, I cannot pursue this interesting subject, nor yet can I here treat of the origin of style more than to merely observe that it is considerably later than the origin of language itself. Neither the original uncouth speech, whether interjectional or onomatopoetic, nor the earliest rude inscriptions, can be said to have style, oratorical or literary. Style is the offspring of specialization; it first appeared when man recognised some one as particularly gifted for expression, and chose him as spokesman because of this ability to communicate what was desired to be said with special force and clearness. Thus arises the orator who achieves and invents oratorical style. Likewise the writer is one who

is selected for his special abilities in expression by word of pen, and the scribe, clerk, and public letter writer arise and evolve literary style as a skilful way of effectively conveying ideas and impressions by written language. The reader is also evolved, and in the reciprocal relations of demand and supply, and the competitive struggle to secure readers, the writer seeks ever more and more to please and interest by introducing and perfecting various inventions to make the reading of his work very easy and enjoyable. Thus it comes that readableness is the natural test for reading matter.

The economic theory of style in fine art plainly implies at bottom physiological economy, for all psychological economy can only be effected on this basis. The psychology of style must rest on a physiology of style. We know that the pleasures of form and colour in sculpture and painting are the reflex of physiological functions as easily and completely performed. The curve of beauty is such because the eye follows it more easily than other lines; the pleasing colour is such because the physiological stimulus is accomplished in a normal and facile way. And as visibility is the test for the arts which appeal to the eye, so audibility is for the fine art which appeals to the ear. Pleasure from

music is the reflex of aural functioning accomplishing the most with least strain. Now the pleasure which comes from literary style must similarly be sought in some physiological mode. While plain print and good paper are incidental pleasures in reading, they are not primarily due to the stylist, who does, however, appeal to the eye by the due proportioning of long and short words, sentences and paragraphs. Though there is no conscious intent by the stylist, yet it may be believed that the use of certain letters and certain successions of letters, as more or less easy for the eye, is a matter of some importance. Some letters and some combinations are ocularly more pleasing than others, and this is clearly founded on economic physiological conditions. It is greatly to be desired that physiologists would invent new alphabetical forms which should be most adapted to the eye. It is scarcely to be supposed that our present A B C's are the simplest and easiest line-combinations for the eye. When the visual side of reading is made as easy as possible, the general reflex sense of facility and pleasure therewith is certainly increased. The artificial languages now being exploited, as Volapuk, ought to and would effect a great physiological saving, as would also be accomplished by a phonetic spelling.

But the direct visible function of style is certainly far inferior to the indirect. The power of style is very largely in stimulating pleasing visual images. The main element in literature, we are told, is vision and imagination, which is but a restimulation and recombination of ocular experiences. Sensation is the source and strong basis for all those faint revivals which are so aptly and pleasantly called up by the literary artist, and hence when the poet speaks of "the light which never was on sea or land," this is really meaningless, since all our light impressions are terrestrial in their nature. To the blind man the whole visual effect, direct and indirect, of style is lost; his imaging power must be in some other sense.

Literature is then, like sculpture and painting, largely a visual art, and its pleasure-giving quality is the reflex of visibility. Mere form and colour may in a sense constitute a picture; though in general we demand that it mean something, suggest something. A picture is such as depicting something, and so being more than a study in form or colour. The mere direct pleasure of ocular sensation plays a large part in graphic and glyptic art, yet it is commonly conceived that some measure of imagination, that is, some indirect visible function, is necessary even here. Sculpture and paint-

ing depend, like literature, on both direct and indirect vision as physiological and psychological bases of æsthetic pleasure.

But in a secondary way literary style depends for its effect upon auditory sensations both direct and revival. We mentally and often orally pronounce as we read, and so appreciate sonorous quality and onomatopoeic force. Alliteration, rhyme, euphony, and rhythm play certainly a considerable part in the charm of style, and literature on this side approaches and passes gradually into music. Euphony answers to melody, and rhyme and rhythm to harmony. Literature may become for us merely a succession of pleasing sounds, as when we hum over some favourite lines of poetry, or when, ignorant of the Italian language, we listen to an opera. Some of Milton's lists of names in such lines as these,—

“Of Cambalu, seat of Cathayan Can,
And Samarchand by Oxus, Temer's throne”—

charm merely by the flow and fulness of sound. But the stylist aims not merely at formal sensuous beauty in tone and cadence of language, he aims to suggest pleasing sounds, and to awaken the auditory imagination, and to harmonize sense with sound, as is done so

successfully by poets like Tennyson and prosaists like Sir Thomas Browne. All this auditory side of literary style is lost on the deaf, as the visual is lost on the blind. Literature as an art is neither blind like music nor deaf like painting, but it is a compound art, visual-auditory, and thus, by virtue of its range, is the greatest of the arts. It is true that indirectly and in a very limited way painting can suggest sounds, and music sights, but literature, both directly and indirectly, can freely and fully give both. Word-music and word-painting are both methods of literary style. In short, the explanation of the pleasure of style is pleasing sight or sound directly or indirectly given, and the explanation of the pleasing character of the sight or sound is as the reflex of easy economical physiological functioning as basis of easy economical psychic function.

But we have now to ask whether economy of attention is the sole psychological secret of style, and whether, indeed, it is always necessary to style. Is style, like grammar or orthography, merely a more or less conventionalized device to make intelligibility certain and easy? Is our reading always the more pleasurable as it is the more effortless? The pleasure of facility certainly bears a large part in much of our literary enjoyment; but there is another and opposite

law of pleasure which, I think, often determines pleasure in style. To accomplish much with no exertion, to slide down a long hill, gives pleasure, but there is also a pleasure in exertion, in climbing hills as well as sliding down. The pleasures of strenuous activity of attention form a certain element in literary effect. The writer may do too much for the reader, may make everything so simple and easy that the reader has nothing to do, but is carried along without volition and curiosity, losing all joy of attainment and grasp. For my own part, I often find authors too fluent and facile, especially among the French, and sometimes among the English, as, for instance, in some of John Stuart Mill's writings. These do not leave enough for me to do, and being led skilfully along so smooth a road that I am not conscious of moving, I lose the pleasure of achievement, of the sense of enlargement of conscious powers. "Easy got, easy goes," is the law here as elsewhere. The pleasure of acquirement is directly as the amount of attention exercised.

Mr. Spencer, in discussing this matter, remarks that as "language is the vehicle of thought, we may say that in all cases the friction and inertia of the vehicle deduct from its efficiency, and that in composition the

chief thing to be done is to reduce the friction and inertia to the smallest amounts." But it must be remembered that motion is not only against friction but by friction. The rail may be too smooth as well as too rough. Every locomotive for a given piece of track with a given gradient has a certain coefficient of friction for its most effective working, above and below which there is alike decrease of efficiency; and in engineering it is equally a problem to keep friction up as to reduce it. So I say of style, that it may be too smooth and facile, and may reduce mental friction to so low a point that there is no grasp and no real progress. A sentence of Hooker or Milton, magnificent stylists though they are, can, as an affair of economy of attention, be greatly improved by breaking it up into a number of simple plain sentences after the primer fashion, "The cat mews," "The dog barks," etc.; but this process certainly is not an improvement of their style. But if economy of attention were the sole secret of style, certainly the more economy we introduce the greater and better should be the style. Professor Sherman, of the University of Nebraska, in a recent article shows that heaviness—that which requires "constant effort in reading"—is due to the number of words

per sentence, which has been reduced in the course of the history of English prose from an average of fifty words a sentence in Chaucer and Spenser to five in the columns of a modern, low-grade, popular story-paper; but it obviously cannot be maintained that the style of the story-paper is ten times better than that of Spenser's *State of Ireland*.

If facility were the secret of style, then the acme of style would be the commonplace, for here is the perfection of facility. But we know that commonplace is the opposite of style. The meaning of the commonplace is so easily absorbed in an habitual, mechanical way that no pleasure is felt. The most common words and phrases are instantly intelligible, and, indeed, as I believe, subconsciously understood, but for that very reason style is lost. By a constant referring of word to image, the fresh and delightful force of the early understandings is lost in a sort of facile reflex knowing, as in using very common terms like "chair," "table," "tree," which are thoroughly understood by most without any conscious imaging, and so without sense of style. Language thus becomes dead, and can only be resuscitated by poetry, which may be defined as the art of using words in such a way as to awaken

image to full life. Poetry partly accomplishes this by a special vocabulary of its own, and partly through the dextrous throwing of the word into a new and more striking position, as by inversion, metre or rhyme, or mentally by a trope, and so leading the mind to image. Poetry revivifies language by bringing out the latent image or inserting a new one. Take Tennyson's expression, "The rainy Hyades vext the dim sea." Here each word in itself may evoke no image, but the combination and the figurative use call up a most vivid image, and that vast reach of the imaginable wherein poetry lies. Even a bare connective, as, and, has its latent image evolved when used emphatically, as in the line—

"With rocks, and stones, and trees,"

where a dim visual "more" is evoked. If the poet uses only the common words of prosaic life, as did Wordsworth, he must have great skill to attain the imaginative effect, and the more common the word the harder it is to give it sensuous force.

We might then set up with plausibility an exactly opposite theory to the economic, and maintain that the secret of style is in exciting us to the greatest attentive effort, and that the best style is that which

rouses us to the severest mental exertion. However, I believe that these two opposite methods of style are complementary. The great stylist is he who strikes the exact mean between over-facility and over-difficulty, and touches the exact coefficient of mental friction in the reader, at which his whole power of mind comes into highest and most harmonious and effective exercise. The accomplished stylist most cleverly throws in questions, suggests doubts, and defers answers. To read his book is not a toboggan slide, but an obstacle race. What is plot interest but a skilful putting of obstacles in the reader's way, deferring and thwarting his expectations, putting him on the *qui vive* of attention? By the development of plot the novelist and dramatist plays hide-and-seek with the reader. No cunning artist reveals at once his whole thought in a blaze of light, but he mystifies and draws in half-tones, thus to stir you to reach out and grasp his meaning.

But we are as yet far from exhausting the psychological significance of pleasure in style when we trace it to a reflex from either decrease or increase of attentive effort. The pleasure we have so far considered is naïve and direct; it is from literary art rather than in or at literary art as such. The child and the most

ordinary reader derive from books a simple and natural pleasure which they do not reflect upon, and do not in any wise conceive the ways and means by which the effect is produced. Indeed, in the presence of the most lucid and perfect art these readers, like Partridge at the play, take everything as a matter of course, as just the way they themselves would express it. The *dilettante* alone tastes the pleasure in style as such ; as an art, an adaptation of means to ends, he alone appreciates the delicate adjustment of expression to thought, the choice diction, the deft management of word and phrase. The quality of this technical pleasure in style is exemplified in its highest form in this note of a great artist-critic, Shelley, appended to his fine translation of the opening chorus in *Faust* :—

“Such is a literal translation of this astonishing chorus ; it is impossible to represent in another language the melody of the versification ; even the volatile strength and delicacy of the ideas escape in the crucible of translation, and its reader is surprised to find a *caput mortuum*.”

The psychological nature of this pleasure in style is obviously quite distinct from the direct pleasures from reading which have been previously discussed. Here is pleasure in literary art, not for what it brings, but for its own sake. The distinction between the

pleasure which the average tourist takes in travelling swiftly and smoothly in a *de luxe* train, and that taken by the professional engineer inspecting the high-speed locomotive, is analogous in quantity and quality to the distinctive pleasures of critical and uncritical appreciation of fine art. But we have as yet only cleared the ground toward ascertaining the psychological *rationale* of literary style. We have marked only general causes of literary pleasure, we have noticed in this pleasure only those elements which flow from the psychological and physiological bases of all pleasure as reflex of functioning. That we admire and take pleasure in nice adjustment of means to ends is also a general law of pleasure with all who act teleologically, and are capable of appreciating actions of this kind. But is there not a specific quality in the æsthetic pleasure from or in literary art which has not yet been accounted for? Certainly the common expression, "more forcible than elegant," as applied to spoken or written language, denotes that for the popular consciousness style is somewhat more than and different from mere force and consequent ease and largeness of apprehension. We hear a very loud sound with greater ease than smaller sounds, there is economy of attention, yet this does not bestow æsthetic quality

on the great sound. At the renderings of the finest music we are often called on to strain the ear, and the mental receptiveness as a whole to the utmost, in order to hear, note, and appreciate the delicate effects. So in literary art it is not that which speaks most loudly and strongly to the mind that thereby becomes the best style. In fact, the most forcible method of expression is often, as is generally acknowledged, slang, which is debarred from style. Literary style seems, then, more than a mental labour-saving machine. As a utilitarian device it certainly does save mental exertion, and gives rapidity, accuracy, and facility to psychic function. Like grammar, a mechanic rhetoric is useful, and we receive a pleasure from its use as from any other mechanism of man's industry; and further, we may take a certain pride and pleasure in its consciously recognised effectiveness. However, we have not yet reached style in the higher sense, which may be clear and forcible, but must be dignified, graceful, and beautiful. For purposes of business, for conventional communication, for science, for philosophy, language fulfils its end in stating accurately, clearly, and forcibly; but style as literary art is more than instrument to intelligibility, it has an independent office of its own. Language in the lower service

as a medium of communication is a lens which cannot be too transparent; but in the higher service to fine art language is rather a mosaic window of stained glass, which both absorbs and transmits light, which both conceals and reveals, which we look at as well as through. In literary art or style language has a value of beauty for itself alone, as well as a value of use as a means of communication.

But the root of style is in emotion; it is an expression of emotion, and in the main of one kind of emotion, that language rises to style. All emotions influence language expression, and any one may, under certain conditions, lead towards literary art; there is an eloquence of wrath and of fear, of hate and of love, and these emotions may induce artistic creativeness in written language; but the main impulse to art is in the feeling for beauty *per se*. This is a certain mode of emotional delight which every one who has felt it knows at once in its quality as quite distinct as a psychic mode. How literary style rises and falls with æsthetic emotion might be exemplified by a wide range of quotations, but an example or two must suffice. This, from one of Shelley's letters, will, I trust, illustrate the point:—

"My Dear P——, I wrote to you the day before our departure from Naples. We came by slow journeys, with our own horses, to Rome, resting one day at Mola di Gaeta, at the inn called Villa di Cicerone—from being built on the ruins of his villa, whose immense substructions overhang the sea, and are scattered among the orange groves. Nothing can be lovelier than the scene from the terraces of the inn. On one side precipitous mountains whose bases slope to an inclined plane of olive and orange copses, the latter forming, as it were, an emerald sky of leaves, starred with innumerable globes of their ripening fruit, whose rich splendour contrasted with the deep green foliage; on the other the sea, bounded on one side by the antique town of Gaeta, and the other by what appears to be an island, the promontory of Circe. From Gaeta to Terracina the whole scenery is of the most sublime character. At Terracina precipitous conical crags of immense height shoot into the sky and overhang the sea. At Albano we arrived again in sight of Rome. Arches after arches in unending lines stretching across the uninhabited wilderness, the blue defined line of the mountains seen between them, masses of nameless ruin standing like rocks out of the plain, and the plain itself, with its billowy and unequal surface, announced the neighbourhood of Rome. And what shall I say to you of Rome? If I speak of the inanimate ruins, the rude stones piled upon stones which are the sepulchres of the fame of those who once arrayed them with the beauty which has faded, will you believe me insensible to the vital, the almost breathing creations of genius yet subsisting in their perfection?"

This letter opens with language as method of conventional commonplace communication. The second and third sentences are barely tinged by æsthetic

emotion, as in "immense substructions" and "lovelier"; but it is not till the fourth sentence that style fairly begins. Then it rapidly falls away in the fifth, sixth, and seventh sentences, to rise again with a new wave of æsthetic emotion, which progresses through the remainder of the quotation. The culminating points of the æsthetic emotion are precisely the culminating points of style, namely, in the phrases, "an emerald sky of leaves, starred with innumerable globes of their ripening fruit," and in "sepulchres of the fame of those who once arrayed them with the beauty which has faded." What constitutes the peculiar attractiveness of these expressions is this, that they are rich in æsthetic feeling, and communicate it to us. We are by the power of style sharers in high delights. In the first case we are awakened to a visualizing, to a sensuous beauty, though compounded with other elements, through metaphor; and in the second case the emotion is a complex of sensuous and spiritual elements.

Take also the verses from Shelley already quoted. Mr. Spencer, in commenting on these lines, has correctly pitched upon the word "shepherded" as the culminating point; but when he intimates that the beauty and pleasing effect is due to the "distinctness with which

it calls up the feature of the scene, bringing the mind by a bound to the desired conception," we must dissent. This purely utilitarian explanation fails to recognise that poetic metaphor is confusing—here two classes of objects, clouds and sheep—and misleading, except to the poetic mind. A writer who was aiming purely at clearness and correctness of imaging, as a popular scientific writer, might mention the clouds as like patches of white wool; but he would not bring in the extraneous ideas of sheep and shepherd. If Mr. Spencer were trying to give us a vivid idea of clouds, he would surely not speak in this purely poetic fashion. It is a mode of fancy and emotion which the poet is indulging when he writes these lines, and not an intellectual impulse to clarify and illustrate. If Mr. Spencer receives them in this latter spirit, he misses their psychic content and explanation. Poetry is only intelligible to the poetic, and the German pedant who emended "*Celia, drink to me only with thine eyes,*" to "*Celia, wink to me only with thine eyes,*" was certainly economizing attention and rendering conception easy, but at the expense of poetic beauty. The source of the pleasure we take in poetic style—the highest and purest form of literary art—is evidently not for its intelligibility, at least primarily, but for its æsthetic

quality, an expression of a peculiar emotional attitude toward objects.

To illustrate this psychological distinction between the sense of beauty as inherent in style, and style as mere force and clearness, I instance further only this sentence from Mr. W. D. Howells' Italian sketches, describing a side-wheel steamer in motion: "The wheel of the steamer was as usual chewing the sea, and finding it unpalatable, and making vain efforts at expectoration." This is the *ne plus ultra* of a pseudo literary style, of affected and strained literary art. An ugly metaphor, forcible and clear enough, is relentlessly pursued to its ugliest conclusion. Here is style in pin feathers, and we are glad to remember that it was writ in callow youth. It brings "the mind by a bound to the desired conception," but this does not sanction it as fine art, for it is utterly without taste and beauty.

I believe, then, from considering the previous examples—and they might be indefinitely extended—that the main function of literary art is not intelligibility, and that pleasure in style in its specific quality does not arise out of economy of attention, but it is a direct communication of pleasant æsthetic emotion artistically conveyed. Intelligibility is a regulative

by-law of art, but it is neither standard nor goal. Literary art is, then, a compromise between intellectual and emotional motives, between sense and sensibility. The natural choice and order of words for easiest apprehension is rarely the artistic order, as every *littérateur* knows full well. It is, for example, simplest and clearest to repeat the best and exact word, yet the literary artist avoids, and rightly, the repetition of words in the same sentence or paragraph. Thus also, while, as Mr. Spencer suggests, rhythm and euphony may often help sense, yet I believe they as often distract from it. We often tend to turn over in a very senseless way words and verses which please the ear. As language is both an organ for meaning and for beauty, literary art, like architectural, is always a compromise between utility and beauty, that is, neither literature or architecture are pure and perfect independent arts. However, it is possible that poetic licence may, as has already been done to some extent in English, ultimately develop a pure poetic language, entirely distinct from the utilitarian product, and bound by none of its practical rules; then and then only will literature become a pure art. And we may suppose that as prose graduates into poetry, and there culminates, so also poetry into music as the purest of all

arts. Thus Mendelssohn's "Songs without Words" express *nuances* of emotion far beyond the capacity of any poetry, and very far beyond prose. Thus in music is style perfected.

Further, that literary art does not always imply clearness and consequent economy of attention is evident when we reflect that the nature of emotion is to disturb the mind, and hence also the language expression. Incoherence, dimness, darkness, as qualities of æsthetic emotion, render literary art correspondingly broken and obscure: the weird, fantastic, and mysterious issue in style, which is far from being easily intelligible. In the dreamy poetry of the Orient all is hazy and evanescent, and the mind strives in vain for clear impressions, yet here is the peculiar charm of style. Among Occidentals William Blake, with his childish incoherence, and Robert Browning, with his harsh abruptness, have a certain obscurity, but both are great stylists and great poets.

Style, then, is at bottom something quite distinct from either ease or difficulty of apprehension. It is founded, not on apprehension at all, but on emotional receptiveness. Hence very active and intellectual natures seem ever debarred from really entering the realms of art, because they ever fail to appreciate that

the function of art is not practical, or ethical, or scientific, or philosophic, but emotional. The man of business, of politics, of science, of thought, cannot give himself up without questioning to be thrilled and suffused by the unanalyzable charm of mere beauty. Such natures seem incapable of receiving, they must get and acquire, and so they miss all that art to which the only Open Sesame is a quiet inattention and a wise passiveness. The kingdom of art is not taken by violence; the violent do not take it by mere intellectual force.

As to the origin and nature of the feeling for beauty in style as for beauty in general, the reason may be sought in survivals of primitive pleasures. Thus the expression, before quoted, "starred with innumerable globes of their ripening fruit," aside from the pleasure in sonorous quality and artistic construction, pleases mainly as awakening the feeling for natural beauty. But what is the psychological explanation for this æsthetic emotion in presence of tree, fruit, flower, sky, and all landscape features. It may largely be a revival of feelings felt long since by our forest-haunting ancestors, "combinations of states which were organized in the race, during barbarous times, when its pleasurable activities were chiefly among the woods

and waters." (Spencer, *Psychology*, Sect. 214.) In the woods and by the streams there tends to revive the long outgrown physical emotion; the old savage feelings of delight and excitement in the chase come back to the civilized man, and in stealthy approach of game and skilful slaying the modern man re-experiences far distant ancestral joys. Now literary art, by skilfully setting forth scenes of savage life, may renew the old survival feelings to a certain degree of illusive life. This is done to a large extent by pastoral poetry, mythic story, legend and fairy tale, whereby we drop back into a very old and simple mode of enjoyable mental life. The basis of primitive psychosis is in the particular concrete and animate, and literary art, especially in its highest manifestation, poetry, as becoming simple, sensuous, and impassioned, has a foundation in survival tendencies. Through literature mankind renews its youth. Similarly we may suppose that if in the future psychic evolution of the race the present mode of thinking in general and abstract terms should be succeeded by some new and higher phase, then the artificial stimulating the revival of this outgrown abstract phase would constitute a source of pleasure, and might be achieved through a style. Thereby as a means toward revivals literary style is

a backward moving spirit in sharp contrast to science, which, as generalizing and depersonifying, is the forward moving process.

However, we have sharply to distinguish between what is given in a survival state and that which accompanies it. Primitive realization is always single and naïve, but when it comes up in a survival it is generally consciously contrasted with accustomed modes by consciousness, and there arises a reflective pleasure of contrast which is not contained in the survival itself, but of which the survival is merely a condition. Further, our realization of the outgrown psychic elements is very generally dramatic. We take self-conscious pleasure in investigating, assuming, and re-enacting past psychic phases. Even when a survival state arises spontaneously and naturally, it holds consciousness at best in its original status for a moment only, for self-consciousness quickly occurs and brings in a variety of secondary emotions. However attained, the obsolescent type of consciousness does not stand in its simple original force, but most often there is more or less make-believe, some sense of its artificial and unreal nature: we do not become children by playing at being children. Children and savages are in the animistic psychic stage, but the

poetic interpretation of nature by adult man is plainly far more than mere revival of this stage, it is dramatic, self-conscious realization. Original animism is often painful; the savage fears his gods and the child dreads ghosts; but myths and ghost-stories are sources of amusement to us, and the twinge of fear which comes up as survival loses its real force and is dramatically realized and enjoyed. Literary art is a dramatic induction into the past rather than incentive to mere revival, and it makes us to pleasurably renew alike the outgrown pains and pleasures. We certainly should go far astray if we should consider style as effectual mainly by its exciting to revival of ancestral experiences. What is recurrent is but a small element compared to what is concurrent.

We must note the particular case of landscape beauty. Shelley's description of the orange-tree laden with fruit excites in us the feeling of pleasure in the beauty of nature, a feeling which is declared by some to be merely the reminiscent revived feelings which our distant progenitors felt in the presence of natural forms and forces. But what was the emotion our remote progenitor felt at sight of a well-fruited orange-tree? Did he feel moved as Shelley was and as we through Shelley are? And is our emotion but a faint

survival of that which welled up in him at viewing the mass of green and gold, or has it any relation thereto? The civilized traveller, as Hallett or Lumholtz, in wild regions is often charmed by the beauty of the scenery, which the savage natives do not in the least appreciate. But the revival feelings which come over him must be identical with the feelings of his unæsthetic companions who are totally insensible to natural beauty. The revival tendency can give to the traveller only an animal pleasure in viewing an orange-tree as satisfying to the taste and stomach; a fine, bright day can only suggest the pleasure of a sluggish basking. Goethe rejoiced that, though the incidental pains of æsthetic sensitivity were great, yet he could see in a tree shedding its leaves more than the approach of winter. Bare revival then cannot in itself constitute æsthetic pleasure or explain it. A savage race transferred to a civilized land for a few generations and then returned to their native haunts have acute pleasures of revival, but these are not of the æsthetic quality. An outcropping survival tendency may serve as itself an object for emotion and æsthetic emotion to the mind experiencing it, but thereby the survival is like any other object, physical or psychical, which excites æsthetic sensibility, and it no more explains

the emotion for beauty than any other object. Style is fundamentally not a going back and downwards to the concrete, but rather as an ascent to a new and spiritualized concrete. Style may thus be defined as the apotheosis of the concrete.

Art sets itself against the crude concrete of primitive experience, and also against the generalization of science and the abstraction of philosophy. Style, then, as an idealistic mode of creating living concretes, aims merely at effect, and so neglects truth. Yet style, exaggeration though it be, is a mode of truth, being true to the idea of type. Science and philosophy are always hindered by mere fact and by the entirety of nature from attaining style, for these prevent them from going out indefinitely on any one line, and from speaking freely, being bounden to reality. Hence realism is the negation of style. Realism on the one side and bombast on the other are the Scylla and Charybdis of style.

It is evident thus far that the psychological basis of stylistic effect is very complex, and in this essay we certainly lay no claim to making an exhaustive enumeration of its factors. However, we have still to consider one more element, and perhaps, at least for cultivated minds, the most important psychic element

of literary art. Read now the following extract, and analyze the impression it makes :—

“The natural thirst that ne’er is satisfied
Excepting with the water for whose grace
The woman of Samaria besought,
Put me in travail, and haste goaded me
Along the encumbered path behind my Leader,
And I was pitying that righteous vengeance ;
And lo ! in the same manner as Luke writeth
That Christ appeared to two upon the way
From the sepulchral cave already risen,
A shade appeared to us, and came behind us,
Down gazing on the prostrate multitude,
Nor were we ’ware of it, until it spake,
Saying, ‘ My brothers, may God give you peace.’”

Here, surely, is neither facility, nor beauty of expression, nor deft and subtle art to please the mind, yet it attracts and interests. The main secret of the effect of Dante’s style is as revelation of personality. Art with Dante is the child of life, the product of long and deep experience ; and because he is an original reality he achieves in his writings that distinctiveness and distinction which is the truest and highest mark of style. We delight to come in contact with originals, and we relish the characteristic for its own sake, even when ugly or when most unlike ourselves in tendency, and so the modernist of the moderns enjoy Dante, the

typical mediævalist. "Style is the man." This is the best definition of style, and the best explanation of its peculiar effect. Style is the expression of subjective quality. Whilst scientist and philosopher aim to be objective, to justly reflect and interpret outward reality, the literary artist aims merely to give a perfect exposition of himself. "*Style*," exclaims Verlaine to his disciples, "*c'est être absolument soi-même*." Style is the literary expression of self-realization. Hence the greatest stylists write to please themselves, and are their own severest critics. Style is *timbre*, and the best style is that in which this peculiar tone of the individual mind is most perfectly revealed. A great style is, then, the expression of a great man, and the consummation of style occurs when the genius has grown to the highest point of his individuality—and individuality is genius—with corresponding power of expression.

Among Tennyson's poems the most Tennysonian has the greatest style. When we quote from Wordsworth such lines as,—

"The world is too much with us ; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers"—

and say of them that they are eminently Wordsworthian,

that no one else could have written them, we have said the highest word for the style.

In the very largest sense style is the evolution of the characteristic; development physical and psychical is but a movement toward style. The progress from homogeneity to heterogeneity in matter; the morphological development of animate things from indefinite, formless beings to definite, complex types; biological integration and specialization—all this is progress of style. Thus the most lion-like lion and the most elephantine elephant respectively achieve the highest style of animal in their kind. The development in the human race is mainly psychic, and includes psychic classes, orders, genera and species, not as yet so clearly tabulated as in general natural history. A genius is the inauguration of a new *genus*, style, or type of man; he is a psychic "sport," to borrow a botanical term. A new mode of personality is achieved, and may manifest itself in various ways of action, thought, and emotion. If the expression is through literature, a great style is generated, and this style grows with the growing individuality—the productions of youth have little style—and culminates with its culmination.

To discover style is almost as rare a gift as to achieve it. The critical sense is about as uncommon as the

creative power; hence the greatest masters of style have had often to wait long for recognition, which would hardly be the case if the main value of style was in economizing attention. According to this theory we should expect the stylist to be welcomed with instant and universal appreciation, a phenomenon which rarely or never occurs. With very many writers, as with Wordsworth, recognition is very tardy, and with some only posthumous. Many readers fail even with utmost attention to appreciate the greatest artists, and can make nothing out of them; a few rise at length to some understanding; but only rare and select spirits find themselves at once *en rapport*. The true connoisseur and critic must introduce and interpret to us the characteristic quality or style of the *littérateur*, else we may never know or feel it. Recognition and appreciation of style as the characteristic is, then, for the vast majority an acquired taste; it is slowly and painfully learned, and so the emotion for style as specific mode of expression must be pronounced a very late psychic development.

The taste and emotion for the characteristic as such, whenever and however acquired, is certainly a peculiar and definite mode of emotion. It is far from being the feeling of discipleship, and is often excited by that

which is most remote and opposite to ourselves. We say of a certain person, "He is a character," and he interests and pleases us as such, though entirely foreign to us in either sympathy or antipathy. As entirely disinterested emotion, the æsthetic is beyond the range of common naïve consciousness. The enjoyment of the characteristic *per se* is specially for the analytically superconscious cosmopolite and for the cultured critic. The pleasure comes partly from the novelty and the contrast reflectively understood, partly from admiration for the forcefulness of creative personality, its plastic power in forming its material of expression, and largely a teleologic pleasure in perceiving fullness and purity of type. The emotion for style as characteristic expression is plainly one of those which is not due to the utility in the struggle for existence, but has arisen when experience comes to be cultivated for its own sake.

When, as in eras like our own, personality weakens, and the inner plastic and creative force of conviction and emotion decreases, the writer is driven to technical treatment. The *littérateur*, as he has little or nothing to say, contents himself with playing tricks on language, and elaborating rhythms and cadences. So style becomes finicky; a race of priggish prosaists and prinking

poetasters arises, punctiliously formal and superlatively dainty, who attain the art of saying nothing very elegantly, elaborately, and brilliantly. But real style cannot be "put on"; it is not like dress, but is the outgrowth of the deepest elements of personality. And in every case the over-conscious, over-subtle technique destroys the grand characteristic style. Man has become too sophisticated to ever again produce the simple, natural art, like the song of birds, which William Morris would rejuvenate. However much we may regret it, the age of instinctive art is for ever past. But I believe that real technique and æsthetic emotion are complementary in their growth, and have on the whole made distinct progress up to the present time. And for the future I look confidently forward to a cosmopolitan age, whose tremendous life shall express itself in the greatest literature of all time.

I trust I have, in this brief study, made it clear that the secret of literary style is far from simple, and that a number of factors are involved, which are slighted by Herbert Spencer and others of that school. I believe that anyone at all conversant with literature, who will reflect upon the pleasures he receives from reading, will perceive that the pleasure of smoothness and facility, of moving along rapidly and easily, is

but one, and that generally a minor factor in literary enjoyment. Beside this, he often has the pleasure of difficulties overcome, of ideas grasped, and delicate emotional touches appreciated by triumphant attentive effort. Again, he receives pleasure in perceiving literary skill, the adaptation of artistic means to the artistic end. But, as I have maintained, the chief mode of pleasure is through style as transmitter of æsthetic emotion and as expression of the characteristic, achieving its acme when both these functions are simultaneously performed most fully and perfectly.

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